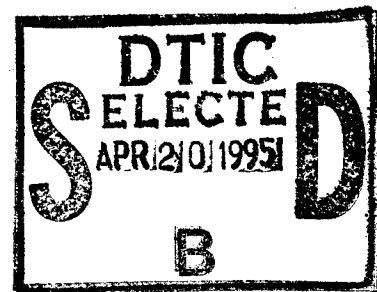
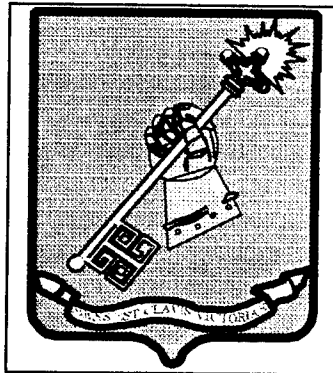


# **BRILLIANT STILETTO**

## **Tactical Strikes and Preemption**

**A Monograph  
by**

**Major Willam C. Flynt III  
Infantry**



**School of Advanced Military Studies  
United States Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas**

**First Term AY 94-95**

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE 19 DEC 1994		3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE BRILLIANT STILETTO: TACTICAL STRIKES AND PREEMPTION			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) MAJOR WILLIAM C. FLYNT III				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS 66027			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) <del>SEE ATTACHED</del>				
14. SUBJECT TERMS — STRIKES — PREEMPTION — POST COLD WAR SECURITY — INFORMATION OPERATIONS — TERRORISM ENVIRONMENT — COUP DE MAIN — STRIKE OPERATIONS — COUNTERFORCE — COUP D'ETAT — PREEMPTIVE STRIKES — NON-LETHAL			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 63	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT UNCLAS			16. PRICE CODE	
18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE UNCLAS		19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT UNCLAS		20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT

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Major William C. Flynt III

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Preemption

Approved by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
LTC George S. Webb, MMAS

Monograph Director

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
COL Gregory Fontenot, MA, MMAS

Director, School of  
Advanced Military  
Studies

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Philip J. Brookes, Ph.D.

Director, Graduate  
Degree Program

Accepted this 17th day of December 1994

## ABSTRACT

BRILLIANT STILETTO: Tactical Strikes and Preemption by MAJ William C. Flynt III,  
USA.

This monograph examines the implications for planning and conducting strike operations to achieve preemption of threats within the fundamentally altered post-Cold War security environment. The underlying premise is that doctrine and tactics based on the Cold War paradigm of combat are of limited relevance. Increasingly the nature of new threats and the blurring of the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war resulting from the emerging security environment, advanced weapons technology and digital communications dictate the need for both lethal and non-lethal preemptive strikes supported by information operations. Five preemptive strike operations are presented and examined, and their characteristics identified. The five strike operations suitable for achieving preemption are interception, ambush, decapitation, critical link strike, and *coup de main*. These strike operations are further delineated into categories of counterforce and countersystem strikes for planning and targeting purposes.

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## Introduction

*Preemptive Attack: "An attack initiated on the basis of incontrovertible evidence that an enemy attack is imminent."*<sup>1</sup>

We are living in the most interesting times. The United States Armed Forces are in a new era where tactical-sized units must play an increasingly important role. Three principal factors have changed the planning and character of future tactical operations: the altered security environment, highly advanced weapons technology and brilliant munitions, and digital communications. Because of these three factors distinctions between the three levels of warfare are less clear than during the Cold War. Today the activities of tactical units can carry potentially strategic ramifications, and strategic goals should be considered before deploying the smallest combat force. The collective effect of these factors alters the way we should conduct warfare.

What these changes have fundamentally affected is our ability to surmise who can threaten our interests, how they intend to operate, what their detailed force, leadership, and logistics composition is, when they intend to attack, and where they are most vulnerable to a preemptive strike. The digital technology of our age is no longer a prototypical potentiality demonstrated in controlled environments for senior decision-makers to marvel at, and hopefully buy. It is being applied by sergeants to determine their location with a precision impossible just five years ago; it is directing Precision Guided Munitions to the sleeping quarters of enemy generals whose location is confirmed by real-time data links from orbiting satellites; it is making possible with conventional, tactical units what until now only nuclear weapons were capable of: a preemptive first-strike capability that paralyses a threat before the enemy can strike.

What might have been heartening news becomes a frightening realization on further reflection. The capability to preempt a threat in today's security environment is not difficult to attain. The weapons, knowledge of targets, intelligence, and freedom from accountability to a peer, patron or superior State are conditions possessed by even the smallest non-State actors. Gone is the world in which this accountability and the

inability to achieve preemption (short of using nuclear weapons or massive conventional forces), kept much of the world in check. With the disintegration of the Soviet Empire and the ready availability of advanced technology, more actors will grind their political axes in the most spectacular ways, using means that until recently were the exclusive property of the most advanced States. As the world becomes increasingly ungovernable, America may be a tempting target for many desiring hegemony within their region.<sup>2</sup>

Where does this collective effect of precision strike capability, real-time intelligence and communication, and the emergence of a multipolar world leave the American military officer operating in an increasingly anarchic security environment? The trend for the last five years has been intervention against foes across the entire spectrum of conflict and sophistication to restore order from Haiti to the Persian Gulf. Simultaneously the American military is being drained of resources and manpower. The intersection of these two trend lines signals the point where involvement exceeds the capability to maintain order using past doctrines and tactics. The need to intervene, based on national interests, will certainly not diminish and could increase. The scarcity of resources and budgets will also continue. How will American military forces meet the challenge?

Two mutually supporting options exist: exploiting technology to multiply the correlation of friendly forces' combat power to the foe's combat power, and neutralizing of threats before they reach major crisis proportions and demand weighty commitments of resources, effort, and political capital. Tactical military preemption of threats by select units can in many cases meet this challenge.

This paper explores the characteristics of tactical military strikes that are used to achieve preemption of a threat. It postulates that relatively small strikes delivered in time against properly selected targets are capable of furthering or protecting US interests, and that American military forces will increasingly be called upon to deliver these strikes in the fundamentally altered international security environment. It identifies five types of tactical strikes suitable for achieving preemption and examines the characteristics of each.



The decision to launch a preemptive strike is a political one. This monograph does not discuss this issue, but begins with the presumption that the political decision to preempt a threat, instead of absorbing the first blow of a coming war, has been made.

### **On BRILLIANT STILETTO**

BRILLIANT STILETTO is the term used throughout this monograph to describe tactical strikes conducted to preempt an enemy attack. Upon analysis there appear to be five broad types of BRILLIANT STILETTO operations within which all preemptive strikes can be categorized: interceptions, ambushes, critical link strikes, decapitations, and *coups de main*. This division of BRILLIANT STILETTO operations is meant to assist in planning and employment considerations, not to delineate impermeable walls between the different types. There are overlapping characteristics and similarities between the five types of operations, as well as significant differences, but segregation is useful to outline the limitations and capabilities of each type of operation. The purpose of this section is to identify and discuss the general characteristics of BRILLIANT STILETTO operations. Subsequent sections will examine each type of operation in detail.

BRILLIANT STILETTO operations differ from normal spoiling attacks conducted during warfare in several aspects. First, they are designed to preclude an identified threat from damaging friendly interests, not to halt a tactical attack during on-going conflict. Second, they rely heavily on a sophisticated targeting process that supports the operators with real-time communication, data, and intelligence on the targeted threat. This exploits extant and rapidly developing weaknesses in the threat for targeting of strike operations. Third, they are conducted by highly agile combat units, equipped with advanced weapons technology, and led by aggressive, competent leaders. These are not necessarily Special Operations Forces (SOF); the type of unit conducting a BRILLIANT STILETTO preemptive strike depends on many factors, including METT-T.<sup>3</sup> BRILLIANT STILETTO operations require a high level of agility and the ability to move large distances, coupled with the employment of a significant and lethal ground

element led by knowledgeable leaders able to make discriminating judgements on the proper management of violence. Air assault forces may be ideal in certain geographic regions, especially using helicopters capable of extreme long-range movement, or operating from aircraft carriers. Fourth, such operations will be among the most sensitive political issues during crisis periods, and they must succeed spectacularly to avoid the most grievous international humiliation. Although not the same type of operation as BRILLIANT STILETTO, the failure of OPERATION DESERT ONE is indicative of the catastrophic impact an abortive mission could have. For this reason, BRILLIANT STILETTO operations will have a potential level of visibility that routine spoiling attacks in an on-going war can never approach. Fifth, BRILLIANT STILETTO strikes may be covert and would thus require a degree of secrecy that a routine tactical spoiling attack launched at a target of opportunity does not require. Lastly, preemptive strikes must achieve near-perfect Operational Security (OPSEC) before the outbreak of hostilities to succeed, whereas a spoiling attack need only achieve local surprise under combat conditions.

BRILLIANT STILETTO is not a panacea; it is a concept that incorporates an age-old and proven tactic with state-of-the-art technology, high quality intelligence and highly lethal forces. It depends for success on a thorough understanding of its limitations and capabilities, correct identification of the target by the military planner, proper delivery of force against the target, and timing. When planned and executed within these four constraints, it is possible to achieve preemption with a tactical strike.

However, nothing is certain in combat, and the failure of BRILLIANT STILETTO must be planned for as a sequel.<sup>4</sup> Commitment to a cause should not be conditional based solely on the calculated success of BRILLIANT STILETTO operations. General war could rapidly follow a failed attempt at preemption against a threat capable of retaliation, and for that reason the cause must justify the possible commitment to expanded combat operations.<sup>5</sup> This does not mean that a willingness to commit to general war must be regarded as the standard against which the decision to use force is measured. It is, however, a prime consideration before deciding to use force. A failed attempt at preemption can be manipulated by the enemy's information operations to

appear as an act of aggressive provocation; the result would be not just a failure to preempt, but also possible loss of the moral claim to *jus ad bellum*, the justness of our action in the eyes of an international audience.

BRILLIANT STILETTO is a preemptive tactic, not a preventive one.<sup>6</sup> As a tactic of preventive war it could, in a strictly military sense, “succeed.” But the reality is that preventive war can only be prosecuted by the various forms of totalitarian governments. Morality speaks against its use in a preventive fashion by liberal democracies.

For a preemptive strike to succeed it is not necessary to achieve complete surprise. The only requirement of a potential BRILLIANT STILETTO target is its continued vulnerability. If the enemy suspects the planning of a BRILLIANT STILETTO operation against him, yet the potential target remains vulnerable, the opportunity still exists for a strike to succeed. Additionally, the generation of disinformation, noise, and the “Cry Wolf” phenomena, as well as other supporting deception operations, could serve to distract and deceive him, ultimately lulling his operators and analysts into complacency or eroding their credibility and allowing a timely surprise strike.<sup>7</sup>

In planning a BRILLIANT STILETTO it may be wise to allow the enemy time to continue in his hostile preparations. If he is constructing a capital-intensive piece of infrastructure, its early destruction allows him time and resources to begin anew, with a heightened awareness of hostile intent and interest. But the destruction, or capture, of a complete or near-complete piece of infrastructure or weaponry causes the loss of large amounts of expended labor, capital, and resources. If captured, it reveals quality intelligence on the level of sophistication and degree of threat, while perhaps contributing in a direct, material way to the friendly forces. A new airfield constructed midway between the United States and a threat State is, indeed, a two-edged sword that can cut either way.

Another aspect of BRILLIANT STILETTO strikes is the potential for information operations to assist in preemption or post-strike operations.<sup>8</sup> Deception, for instance, can increase the chance of achieving surprise. Psychological Operations can lessen the possibility of indigenous populations resisting friendly military forces. Public affairs

efforts that get “our story” out can favorably sway domestic and international opinion, cement coalitions together in a just cause, and deny the enemy any claim to the moral high-ground.<sup>9</sup> The need for a public affairs effort, and by extension other information operations, is pointed out by Frank J. Stech in his article “Winning CNN Wars,” “No matter how logical the calculus that led to a policy, without a clear and coherent story frame for that policy, there is little hope of building public understanding or support.”<sup>10</sup>

Although information operations are useful in supporting BRILLIANT STILETTO strikes, they are not decisive. Force is required where irreconcilable differences cannot be muted through the exercise of other instruments of power. Force was, is and will remain the *ultima ratio* of States.<sup>11</sup>

In support of the absolute necessity of force Clausewitz noted the aim of all warfare must be the destruction of the enemy army.<sup>12</sup> It is not enough, in other words, for public support and a United Nations resolution to be on your side, or simply to out-manuever the enemy in occupying so-called “threatening positions” along his Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs). The object of maneuver is not just maneuver, but gaining a positional advantage in order to bring effective force to bear. As such, the concept of BRILLIANT STILETTO complies with Clausewitz's rejection of simple posturing by military forces. Preemptive strikes achieve success through the advantage of surprise, speed, and shock to the enemy's critical threat potential, or the threat's center of gravity. Due to their agile nature, BRILLIANT STILETTO forces gain positional advantage from which they deliver not only *effective* force, but also *efficient* force.

The concept of BRILLIANT STILETTO is limited war for a negative aim; preemption, not conquest, is ultimately the desired end. It thus incorporates the strengths of the offense and defense, without incurring their disadvantages. Clausewitz stated “that defense is the stronger form of fighting with the negative purpose, attack the weaker form with the positive purpose.”<sup>13</sup> In addressing the concept of defense, he stated it is the “parrying of a blow,” and that its characteristic feature is “awaiting the blow.”<sup>14</sup> BRILLIANT STILETTO strikes are designed to parry an impending blow, but they exercise tactical *offensive* operations to do so. Thus, a disadvantage of the defense, namely “awaiting the blow,” is not inherent in preemptive strikes. The advantage of the

offense, namely surprise as to whether, how, when, and where the blow will fall, is, however, inherent in strike operations mounted against an unsuspecting enemy. Clausewitz points out that defense is the stronger form of fighting, in part because it seeks only to deny an objective. Spoiling a plan is easier than carrying one out, especially given the "friction" of combat; so many things can go wrong, and the more ambitious the plan, the greater its susceptibility to the vagaries of chance. Thus, in seeking merely to forestall the enemy's plan, BRILLIANT STILETTO operations enjoy the advantages of the defense's "negative purpose," while simultaneously possessing the advantages of offensive operations.

Clausewitz continues in differentiating the offense from the defense in discussing what he has identified as decisive advantages: "Only three things seem to us to produce decisive advantages: *surprise, the benefit of terrain, and concentric attack*."<sup>15</sup> He also asserts, "Bearing in mind the three elements of victory already described [the decisive advantages], the answer must be this: the attacker is favored by only a small part of the first and third factors [surprise and concentric attack] while their larger part, and the second factor exclusively, are available to the defender."<sup>16</sup> What Clausewitz is analyzing, however, are traditional notions of defense and offense. The three "decisive advantages" are all fully available to preemptive strike operations.

Surprise is achieved through secrecy and speed.<sup>17</sup> Agility, OPSEC, and initiative are all strengths of BRILLIANT STILETTO forces, and because of this the first decisive advantage is one of their chief characteristics. The "benefit of terrain" and "concentric attack" also are used to advantage by a strike force's ability to choose the time, place and method of attack. In the traditional model of offensive operations the time and method of attack were offensive initiatives, but the terrain was chosen by the defense. In strike operations not only are the timing and method the choices of the strike force, but where the strike will take place is also its prerogative. The only exception to this is if there existed just one, stationary target for the strike force - a possible, though not likely, scenario.

In short, BRILLIANT STILETTO is an emerging tactic of furthering and protecting friendly interests through the military instrument of power. In the new

security environment, tactical strikes aiming at preemption of threats provide decision-makers with military options that are low-profile, low-cost, and efficient in the ratio of force applied to benefit obtained.

Having identified the five types of BRILLIANT STILETTO preemptive strike operations covered in this paper and discussed their application in general, we will now examine the characteristics of each in detail.

### **On Interception**

A BRILLIANT STILETTO interception is defined as the attack or apprehension of a threat during movement. This requires excellent intelligence, real-time force vectoring capabilities, and agile BRILLIANT STILETTO interception forces. When conducted to achieve preemption an important distinction is that the enemy has not only made the decision to attack, but also that the initial steps for this attack are in progress.

A historical example, although not an effort to achieve preemption, dramatically illustrates the concept and feasibility of a BRILLIANT STILETTO interception. On 8 October 1985, members of the Palestine Liberation Front, a splinter group of the Palestine Liberation Organization, hijacked the Italian cruise liner *Achille Lauro*. In the course of the hijacking the terrorists murdered an American citizen. In response to this crime, President Reagan ordered the interception of the Egyptian airliner carrying the terrorists who had since surrendered to Egyptian authorities and were flying to an undisclosed destination. F-14 fighter aircraft launched from the aircraft carrier USS Saratoga when the Egyptian Boeing 737 airliner was detected by national-level intelligence assets and the USS Saratoga's own E2C Hawkeye surveillance planes. The F-14s intercepted the Egyptian aircraft over the Mediterranean and forced it to land at the US Sigonella Airbase in Italy. Additionally, when the Egyptian pilot attempted to radio Egyptian authorities before obeying orders from the F-14s, his communications were jammed by EA6B Prowler aircraft capable of electronic warfare.<sup>18</sup> This operation contains all the elements of a BRILLIANT STILETTO interception, with the exception

that it was conducted in an attempt to bring terrorists to justice and not to achieve preemption of a threat.

Typically the term interception conjures up just such an image of an F-14 flying behind an enemy aircraft, or a naval ship coming alongside a hostile State's ship. These are BRILLIANT STILETTO operations when conducted to accomplish preemption or another sensitive task, and not just the result of routine border or combat patrolling. The critical difference is that a BRILLIANT STILETTO interception accomplishes its mission through rapid alert, deployment, maneuver, and striking of the enemy force based on knowledge of threat intentions and high-fidelity intelligence vectoring the BRILLIANT STILETTO forces. BRILLIANT STILETTO interceptions do not result from prosecuting force-on-force exhaustion warfare or routine operations.<sup>19</sup> Sometimes, however, the mundane reality may be much less exciting or spectacular than the *Achille Lauro* example.

One such example from a more routine world than the *Achille Lauro* incident would be the seizure of sensitive technological machinery enroute to a hostile State, perhaps from a legitimate commercial shipper acting as an unwitting courier. This example also illustrates that violence is not a necessary element of all BRILLIANT STILETTO operations. Non-lethal means can also be effective in preemption given certain, special conditions. If the intent is to intercept the illicit transfer of dangerous technologies transported by a commercial agent, there is every reason to do this without violence to the crew or ship. Routine customs procedures may even suffice. Violence in this situation would clearly be counterproductive and unwarranted. Nevertheless, it remains a BRILLIANT STILETTO interception, based on intelligence and typified by a highly selective and rapid response.

BRILLIANT STILETTO interceptions are counterforce oriented.<sup>20</sup> Because the enemy force is actually enroute to conduct hostile military operations, it may be a significantly "harder" target to detect, identify, track and engage than when it is conducting administrative moves. Enemy attack profiles are designed for evasive or camouflaging characteristics, whether low-level flight of aircraft or surreptitious crossing of borders by individual operators. For this reason, an enemy force's patterns of

movement and operations, attack profiles, and *modus operandi* must be known and analyzed in detail to determine optimum temporal and spatial windows for strike operations.

When the time, route and method of the enemy movement is not known, it is still possible to intercept him if he can be detected by sensors or other intelligence assets. This presupposes the ability to track the threat once detected and identified, in order to guide BRILLIANT STILETTO interception forces to the target. Where the threat is unlikely to change its approach or incapable of doing so, interception is still possible as long as the threat is unaware of the interception forces and continues along its route or is constrained to a highly-predictable one.

The ability to choose the location of interception is important for several reasons. First, it allows BRILLIANT STILETTO forces to choose the battlefield in time and space. This has ramifications for avoiding politically sensitive borders and territories, as well as dates that have significant political or religious connotations. Secondly, the force that chooses the battlefield can use advantages of the spatial and temporal battlefield to its purpose. The nature of terrain, such as high-ground or maritime chokepoints, can offer the BRILLIANT STILETTO force tactical advantages, again illustrating the ability to attain Clausewitz's second decisive advantage of the "benefit of terrain," both spatially and temporally. Choice of time and space may allow the tactical advantage of superior night-fighting capabilities, attacking out of the sun, conducting the interception under cover of darkness or in a remote area to improve plausible deniability, or using the date of interception for political purposes. Thirdly, the ability to choose when and where to strike may also present BRILLIANT STILETTO forces with options of available friendly forces to employ. Delaying the strike may present no advantage from the perspective of terrain, time or enemy disposition, but may allow the employment of different or additional BRILLIANT STILETTO forces; conscious delays in interception may result in better chances of success due to bringing additional or different forces to bear. Fourth, the delaying of the strike may offer a more lucrative target. As explained, the enemy may be investing significant assets, resources, and effort in building a capability, the premature destruction of which would allow him to recover and start anew. Because of



this, a conscious delay in striking may result in the subsequent destruction of such a large amount of enemy efforts and resources that it may prove impossible for the threat to recover or rebuild this capability due to the loss of capital investment, equipment or forces. An example would be the interception of a ship containing the entire threat supply of weapons-grade plutonium, obviously preferable to intercepting a single courier with a small amount enroute to the ship. Fifth, delay may allow decision-makers additional time to garner political support from allies. Clearly, the time available to do this depends on the nature of the threat. The time available to preempt an airstrike will differ widely from the interception of a maritime vessel carrying sensitive technologies to a distant port. The consideration of any counterforce strike, like a BRILLIANT STILETTO interception, as an option is not so much a question of pure capability as it is employing extant and potential capabilities in *time*. The nature of the threat may or may not allow time to garner political support, or airspace rights, from allies for preemptive operations. Sixth, delay of an interception may allow for absolute confirmation of enemy intentions, thus removing any later ambiguity about the need to strike. Once the threat is on its final approach to the friendly target, and thus committed to hostile action, its destruction and the subsequent friendly manipulation of information and gun-camera footage in information operations may allow the friendly forces to occupy the “moral high-ground” without any ambiguity surrounding the incident.

Despite the inherent complexity of a BRILLIANT STILETTO interception due to the simultaneous movement of both friendly forces and enemy forces, decision-makers may choose interception of a threat rather than its destruction before launching. This may be to exercise the advantages of interception operations, such as choosing the spatial or temporal battlefield, or because political considerations dictate that the enemy must first indisputably demonstrate hostile action. However, the decision to mount an interception over options that would allow destruction of the threat before launching is one that entails great risk. Failure to intercept successfully results in an enemy force potentially forewarned while still enroute to accomplish its mission. For all the advantages, interception strikes the threat late in the window of opportunity, with fewer options and less reaction time should the BRILLIANT STILETTO strike fail.<sup>21</sup>

## On Ambush

A BRILLIANT STILETTO ambush is defined as an attack on a moving threat by “waiting” friendly forces that are not moving. For accurate targeting of the threat, its departure point, route, target, and timing should be known. Of course, not all of these factors are needed. For instance, if its departure point and time are known, it can be ambushed at its origin. Correspondingly, if its target and time of attack can be confirmed, it can be ambushed near the target. If the only fact known is its route, then forces can be placed in ambush along it to wait for the enemy.

A BRILLIANT STILETTO ambush can also, like interception, appear to be the result of routine processes, but still accomplish the mission of stopping the threat without entailing a loss of life. An example would be BRILLIANT STILETTO forces posing as customs officials "ambushing" a suspicious shipment. This is what happened on 28 March 1990, when nuclear weapon triggers intended for Iraq were seized in London in a joint sting operation by US and British customs. On 11 April 1990 pieces of piping intended as the barrel components for an Iraqi nuclear supergun were also seized in a similar operation.<sup>22</sup>

BRILLIANT STILETTO ambushes are efficient operations. They have several advantages over the enemy. First, ambushers choose the battlefield, either spatially or temporally, if enough intelligence on the enemy is known. Second, by exercising an ambush they enjoy familiarity with the terrain chosen, whether a mountain pass or an airport lobby. Third, personnel or items that are conspicuous to the eyes of an area resident will appear unremarkable to the eyes of a stranger. Thus, BRILLIANT STILETTO forces can be armed and still hidden in plain sight, as security guards or border crossing personnel, without alarming a targeted threat force that was expecting the presence of just such personnel at airports or border crossing stations. Fourth, the ability to choose the place of ambush confers the ability to manipulate the outcome for purposes of information operations. For example, should it be necessary to protect an "insider" intelligence asset from compromise, the ambush of the threat force can be made to appear the result of a chance discovery during routine security precautions, such as by bomb

dogs. In this case, the enemy may believe his plan foiled by simple bad luck and not accurate "insider" intelligence as to his most classified operations. The intelligence asset is thus conserved for further use against the enemy.<sup>23</sup> Another purpose of managing and exploiting the information surrounding an ambush could be to allow the international community to view video tapes of the threat being ambushed to justify subsequent reprisals or provide the basis for condemnation in the United Nations.

Generally, a BRILLIANT STILETTO ambush will be desirable when the situation calls for a counterforce strike and an economy of force is necessary. Ambushes should also be considered to support interceptions, should the interception fail, or to cover alternative routes the target may take if alerted to the possibility of interception. As a superior economy of force operation, an ambush requires fewer assets to be successful than an interception requires because of the latter's inherently greater mission difficulty. As a counterforce strike, ambushes are generally preferable to interceptions because of their greater simplicity and efficiency, and the advantages of a static defense in destroying an unsuspecting enemy force.

Another characteristic of an ambush is the likelihood of capturing threat forces or assets, which may be the motivation behind mounting the operation. This could be to reinforce a negotiating position by gaining a "bargaining chip," obtain intelligence through interrogation, intercept a message, capture a sensitive item, or bring an individual to justice. Similarly, any friendly sensitive weapons components, technologies, or materiel could be recovered by placing ambushes along routes and modes of transportation. Enemy operatives known to be in a given location can also be cordoned and isolated by low-profile ambushes conducted by BRILLIANT STILETTO forces, perhaps in plain view if the threat is unfamiliar with area characteristics and personnel.

Planners can also design BRILLIANT STILETTO ambushes to provide plausible deniability or generate disinformation concerning the situation surrounding the threat destruction or capture. Much of the information created by a BRILLIANT STILETTO ambush can be manipulated or kept secret. This may be desirable for several reasons. An ambush resulting in the apprehension of a terrorist may remain covert to create doubt

in the minds of his political masters concerning his whereabouts and intentions. This doubt can then be exploited by information and deception operations that suggest the terrorist has surrendered and requested amnesty in exchange for his knowledge of existing terrorist networks operating under the control of his organization. The possibility that the networks have, indeed, been compromised would severely limit their operations, forcing some degree of reorganization of the cells.

Upon analysis, there are basically three reasons to conduct an ambush: to gain control of a thing, to apprehend personnel, or to destroy a force. The hallmark of a BRILLIANT STILETTO ambush is its ability to deal with a specialized threat that is beyond the routine capabilities of either police or customs forces, due to the threat's dangerous nature, sensitive political nature, or sensitive technology. With these types of threats, a high degree of certainty is required that the ambush will be successful. Possible threats justifying a BRILLIANT STILETTO ambush are terrorists, nuclear weapons and components, sensitive technologies, threat politico-military leaders, leaders of non-State threats, threat commando forces, and the black-market transfer of destabilizing weapon systems.

The very term "ambush" connotes a swift and violent engagement of a moving enemy force by a stationary element. This would in all probability be the vast majority of the BRILLIANT STILETTO ambushes conducted. The technological superiority of BRILLIANT STILETTO forces coupled with the advantages of an ambush makes an effective and efficient tactic when violence is required. But not all ambushes must be lethal to achieve preemption. BRILLIANT STILETTO ambushes allow a measure of selectivity regarding the application of force, and because of this go beyond the ability to simply destroy or capture. They can incorporate sophisticated information operations to enhance the effects of the amount of force actually used or to increase plausible deniability. Due to the inherent advantages of an ambush, they also provide a high chance of success in the more demanding and sensitive types of counterforce strikes, where failure can have the most damaging consequences.

## On Critical Link Strikes

A BRILLIANT STILETTO critical link strike is defined as the attack of a threat system's critical subcomponents rendering the system ineffective. To execute a critical link strike, the degree of dependence by the threat on specific systems and components must be ascertained.

One of history's most daring and important critical link strikes was the Allied commando mission against the Norsk Hydro Plant during World War II. At the beginning of the war the only commercial producer of heavy water, a necessary component for atomic weapons production, was the Norsk Hydro Plant in Norway. Following Nazi occupation, the plant was incorporated into the German atomic research effort. The Allies launched a preemptive strike. A team of nine Norwegian commandos infiltrated the plant at the end of February 1943, and destroyed both storage and production facilities. Unfortunately, production of heavy water resumed quickly. After a subsequent Allied bomber mission failed to damage the plant, the Germans sought to ensure the safety of the heavy water by transporting it to Germany. Norwegian commandos sabotaged the shipment, and the ferry transporting the heavy water sank in 1,300 feet of water.<sup>24</sup> A preemptive tactical strike by a small dismounted force accomplished what a massive air attack could not.

The prosecution of modern war is accomplished through many types of weapon and equipment systems. Increasingly the vehicle for delivering violence against the enemy is itself a complex and tightly-linked system of subordinate systems and capabilities. As the complexity of these systems increases, systemic fragility increases as well. BRILLIANT STILETTO forces can exploit this fragility to defeat threats and achieve preemption, much as the Norwegian commandos preempted the emerging threat of a German atomic bomb by destroying a critical subcomponent.

Targeting an enemy system through a BRILLIANT STILETTO critical link strike thus offers great promise for gaining advantage. In selecting a threat system to target for a preemptive strike, the following criteria should be considered: 1. Criticality to the enemy's capabilities; 2. Vulnerability to friendly attack; 3. Threat of the system to

friendly forces and interests; 4. Recuperability of the targeted system; and 5. Complexity of the system.<sup>25</sup>

The criterion of criticality describes how essential the asset is to threat capabilities. Targeting only essential systems results in a number of advantages. First, targeting only those systems critical to the enemy's course of action minimizes the collateral damage potential of indiscriminately targeting all threat systems. It is, in short, smarter and more efficient targeting that results in less loss of innocent life and property. The second advantage is the husbanding of friendly strike assets. By reducing the target list to those systems absolutely critical to the enemy's ability to prosecute war, the dedication of a greater ratio of strike assets to targets results in increased probability of success. The third advantage is that targeting only those systems that can be obviously perceived by an international audience as a direct and imminent threat to friendly interests gives the enemy less moral justification to retaliate. The destruction of some systems may, in fact, hamper the enemy's war effort but result in undue hardship to innocents. Planners should avoid targeting such systems if not critical to the threat in order to deny the enemy what could be perceived internationally as a legitimate *casus belli*.

The second criterion of threat system vulnerability is a measure of how susceptible it is to damage or destruction. All systems are to some extent vulnerable; the question is actually one of the assets and effort required to destroy it. The criterion of vulnerability contributes to the target selection process by giving a higher priority to those systems whose destruction is easier. By their nature BRILLIANT STILETTO forces are small, tactical units. Committing this type of force in sufficient numbers to assure the destruction of a hardened, well-defended target could only be justified if the target was absolutely critical and of decisive importance. It is more likely that several different threat systems will be vulnerable to varying degrees, and that preemption can be achieved through targeting those systems that are not hardened or well-defended.

Thirdly, BRILLIANT STILETTO planners must evaluate the system's threat potential. To what extent could the enemy system harm friendly interests or forces? Planners must accord systems that are highly lethal and capable priority for strike over

those systems that pose lesser dangers. Subsequent operations, if necessary, can then strike remaining enemy systems with a greater degree of safety, and perhaps even impunity.

Fourth, the criterion of recuperability addresses how readily the enemy can repair a damaged system. Systems easily repaired or replaced are less attractive targets than threat systems that possess unique capabilities and are irreplaceable. A system that cannot easily recover from a strike, that has no acceptable substitutes, and that is additionally critical, is a lucrative target.<sup>26</sup>

Thus far the considerations for identifying and selecting a threat critical link system for a BRILLIANT STILETTO strike have been relatively straightforward. The intent is to identify those systems that the enemy needs, that friendly forces can easily damage, that are difficult to replace, and that are dangerous to friendly interests and forces. These first four criteria are equally important, and the significance placed on each will vary with the situation; they comprise the basic assessment of which systems are good target candidates for a preemptive strike.

The fifth criterion, complexity of the system, takes the analysis beyond the basic deliberation phase. The study of the complexity of the system incorporates a detailed analysis of how, when and where to attack the targeted system, as well as what the secondary and tertiary effects of such an attack could be.

Throughout his book Normal Accidents: Living with High-Risk Technologies, Charles Perrow details the characteristics and potentials of complex systems. Although principally a study of the possibility of catastrophic accidents due to the nature of modern, high-technology systems as diverse as railroads and nuclear reactors, the findings lend themselves remarkably well to the analysis of targeting such systems. Perrow advances the argument that one can best identify and describe complex systems, and their inherent weaknesses, using the characteristics of *coupling* and *interactions*.<sup>27</sup>

The concept of *coupling* deals with the degree of tolerance in the processes, steps, and sequences of the working of a system. What is meant by a tightly-coupled system is that the processes happen very fast and cannot easily be delinked from each other.<sup>28</sup> When one step is complete the system is rapidly engaged in the next step's execution.<sup>29</sup>

An advantage of tight coupling is that the responsiveness of the system is high.<sup>30</sup> This leads to increased performance levels, or lethality in the case of modern war's systems, but at the cost of some degree of ability to interact with the system when operating.

The disadvantage of operating a tightly-coupled, highly-responsive system is that once it gets going it is usually harder to stop.<sup>31</sup> Of course, engineering designs can compensate for this by incorporating devices to control the operation of the system. Emergency shut-off valves and other mechanisms can be engineered to shut down a system that is going out of control. Yet, even emergency devices such as electrical cut-off switches and protective "firewalls" can fail.<sup>32</sup>

To illustrate how a tightly-coupled system can be affected by failure of a subcomponent, consider a racing car. The failure of a tire on a racing car could throw it into the wall and cause it to come apart at high speed, with catastrophic collateral damage. The analogy shows how tightly-coupled systems, due to the failure of a relatively simple, low-technology subcomponent like a rubber tire, can be blown apart. BRILLIANT STILETTO forces target such subcomponents in a critical link strike to achieve destruction of a threat system and thus preempt the threat.

The opposite of a tightly-coupled system is a loosely-coupled one. As Perrow describes, the extreme of loose coupling would be no automaticity between steps at all, requiring perhaps even a decision for manual intervention in the process to move it to the next step.<sup>33</sup> The responsiveness and performance level of loosely-coupled systems are generally less than those of tight systems; however, they are also generally more forgiving.<sup>34</sup> In a loose system, Action B must not always follow Action A; the operator may decide to shut the system down while he takes a lunch break or to lower the temperature level of the machinery.<sup>35</sup> To extend the blown tire analogy, the failure of the tire on a normal passenger car operating within established speed limits would result in the driver pulling off the road, changing the flat, and then resuming the trip. This is a loosely-coupled system.

The implications of a system's tightness of coupling is important when considering how best, or whether, to strike it. A tightly-coupled system suffering a damaging strike may continue to run through its designed process even after the hit, thus



resulting in even more damage. Secondary explosions can cause fire-storms; ruptured water mains can flood entire city blocks; broken hydro-electric dams can fail in the most dramatic fashion. Thousands of examples could be imagined, using electrical grids, computer networks, communication infrastructures, rail-lines, canals, airports, highway systems, coastal navigation aids, and hundreds of other systems. If such a system is sufficiently critical, and damaged in a strike, it may result in successful preemption.

Another aspect of systems Perrow describes is the type of inter-systemic and intra-systemic *interaction*.<sup>36</sup> Basically, there are systems that are *complex* or *linear* in their interactions. *Linear interactions* are those expected, familiar steps in product assembly lines.<sup>37</sup> A weapon system proceeds down the line, and at each station some task is performed that brings it nearer to completion. If a section of the line is damaged by a strike, the weapon system could be routed to undamaged stations until the line is again operating normally, and the step in question then performed. Even if in this linear interaction the process cannot proceed until the damaged portion of the assembly line is repaired, the preceding processes can continue and an inventory of the weapon system built up until the resumption of normal operations, while those weapon systems at subsequent stations beyond the damaged one can be completed and fielded to the threat forces. Some other stations may even be able to surge and accomplish not only their own routine task, but also with some degree of outfitting or training, the tasks of the damaged portion of the line until normal operations resume.<sup>38</sup>

*Complex interactions*, on the other hand, are those of unfamiliar, unplanned or unexpected sequences.<sup>39</sup> Further compounding the potential for secondary damage is the fact that they may not initially even be visible or comprehensible.<sup>40</sup> One example of a complex interaction that was not initially visible nor immediately comprehensible was the Chicago flood of April 1992. An underground tunnel system built at the turn of the century and designed to take coal to buildings and haul away refuse runs under the city. Abandoned since the 1940s the tunnel system had fallen into disrepair, and the tunnel walls were deteriorating. One such tunnel ran about 15-20 feet under the Chicago river, and recent bridge repairs in the immediate vicinity had further damaged the structural integrity of the tunnel wall. The result was a cave-in that allowed the Chicago river to

pour throughout the tunnel system and flood the downtown Chicago area known as the Loop. Electrical, gas, telecommunication, computer, sewer, and other systems contributing to the well-being, safety, business, and comfort of Chicago's citizens were affected by the failure of the obsolete tunnel system. Large-scale relief and emergency engineering efforts continued for weeks following the disaster.<sup>41</sup> A similar situation resulting from a BRILLIANT STILETTO strike could be imagined in an infinite number of ways. This is a clear demonstration that a system's fragility, or susceptibility to damage from a strike, increases in proportion to its complexity of interaction and the tightness of its couplings.

This is one of the most important considerations for BRILLIANT STILETTO targeting. The capacity to inflict extensive damage with a small force is improved through selecting a tightly-coupled target with complex interactions, as well as striking the target in a critical area or subcomponent. A similar level of damage resulting from a hypothetical strike against the Chicago tunnel system could not have been achieved through indiscriminate targeting of just the tunnel system. The combination of the Chicago river, the tunnel, and the proximity to a critical downtown business area accounted for the level of damage.

These considerations of *coupling* and *interactions* are germane to the sophisticated targeting required for all BRILLIANT STILETTO operations and act as guidelines for target selection.<sup>42</sup> From the above analysis of what a BRILLIANT STILETTO critical link strike is, and what characteristics and vulnerabilities threat systems that make good candidates for such strikes possess, several considerations become evident:

1. Any well-designed critical threat system will incorporate a level of redundancy to ensure its functioning survival after a strike. Nevertheless, certain key elements of the system will act as chokepoints or terminal elements in the system, thus constituting lucrative targets.
2. A subcomponent in a decision system may act as a chokepoint if it is a route for transmission of orders, information, instructions, codes, or data. Even a highly redundant decision-loop may still use a common node of communications. In this case,

the object that is the critical component in the system is the common node. The same holds true for the transportation of threat forces and materiel. There may exist a common node, an airfield or seaport for instance, that is a lucrative target.

3. Should redundancy be so complete that a critical node cannot be identified, the system may be “killed” at either, or both of, its two terminals. One terminal, the decision-making entity and the communication infrastructure that transmits the decision, may be considered the system’s “brain” and the other terminal, the forces or weapon systems themselves, its “weapon.” Where multiple “brains” or “weapons” exist, all may require strikes.

4. A fully redundant threat system will be rendered useless if its weapon cannot be launched or used. Therefore, a State or non-State actor with a single nuclear device, for example, can be neutralized by destroying, neutralizing or capturing the device itself. Where the threat weapon system or force can with certainty be destroyed, neutralized or captured it is not necessary to target the decision-making entity for preemption to be obtained.

5. If the “weapon” is difficult to strike, such as a hardened missile silo or a threat submarine underway, then BRILLIANT STILETTO forces must target the “brain,” or decision-making entity. This may not be a human but could be a Command, Control, Communications, Computer, Intelligence and Information (C4I2) site from which the decision must emanate, due to the physical characteristics and design of the threat communications infrastructure.

6. A highly-sophisticated system, due to well-designed redundancy, could be invulnerable to a death blow resulting from a critical link strike. It may not, however, be necessary to kill the system completely; damage may delay or degrade the system’s performance to the extent that other means and forces may be given sufficient time to rally and deliver the *coup de grace*.

7. A BRILLIANT STILETTO targeted against a critical link may be the best available option due to time considerations and could serve to allow the introduction of follow-on heavy conventional forces into the situation, with accompanying escalation of the crisis. This escalation may deter the threat from continued conflict, due to the

increase in the stakes.

Critical link strikes attempt to achieve preemption by targeting complex threat systems. These complex systems are necessary for the prosecution of modern war and encompass all aspects of threat structure from decision transmission channels, to physical forces, to logistics channels. Critical link strikes promise potentially large payoffs in achieving preemption if targeting is effective in identifying the critical components and vulnerabilities of a threat system.

### **On Decapitation**

A BRILLIANT STILETTO decapitation is a preemptive strike that targets key threat decision-makers or facilities involved in hostile activity. It is a strike directed exclusively against the leadership system of the threat.

A recent example of targeting key threat C4I2 facilities and leadership, including a head of state, is OPERATION EL DORADO CANYON. In this operation US Air Force and US Navy aircraft conducted an airstrike against Libyan government buildings, military installations, and other targets at Tripoli and Benghazi on 14 April 1986. The strike caused extensive damage of five separate military targets, including a facility that frequently housed Libyan leader Muammar al-Qaddafi. Several key C4I2 facilities, including the Libyan intelligence service headquarters, were "virtually destroyed."<sup>43</sup>

In addressing the concept of BRILLIANT STILETTO operations that aim at decapitation, it is useful first to clarify what it is not. A BRILLIANT STILETTO decapitation strike is not assassination, nor is it the purely politically motivated killing of an individual. Individuals, *per se*, are unimportant; it is their positional power and authority that is critical.

Rarely can the death of a single man stop a war, although there have been cases when the assassination of a leader has resulted in war. World War I is, of course, the best example. Advocates of assassination grossly overestimate the influence of a single individual. States, even dictatorships, are almost always governed by a power elite. Some power elites may consist of only a handful of key individuals - perhaps the political

leader, a head of secret police, a key general, and a son as the heir apparent. The most tyrannical despot, a Hitler or a Stalin, still needs a policy-communication and enforcement infrastructure. The death of the tyrant does not, in and of itself, remove this structure. There will always be an *eminence grise* in the wings to take up the mantle of power from the dead shoulders of his former master. Indeed, the cases where the assassinations of individuals have resulted in the fracture of the power elite tend to be cases where there was more than one pretender to the throne, a factor speaking for the conduct of a BRILLIANT STILETTO decapitation.

Additionally, there are compelling military and political reasons not to conduct assassination. Martyrs grow in stature, but dictators can be discredited while still alive to suffer the embarrassment. The aftermath of assassination is difficult, at best, to forecast. Another dictator, far worse, may replace the fallen martyr. Often the devil we know is preferable to the one we have yet to meet. Assassination is, in short, a flawed policy.

Decapitation, however, is neither assassination nor a euphemistic dodge. In fact, given certain, special circumstances decapitation could theoretically be accomplished without the loss of any life, using sub-lethal munitions and tactics. The target at which advocates of assassination aim, but miss, is the enemy's policy-communication infrastructure. The *effect* desired is to eliminate the transmission of information and decisions to execution systems. The goal is to deny the enemy the ability to control those forces threatening friendly interests, perhaps even the control of his State.

To this end, enemy leadership, communications infrastructure, C4I2 nodes and facilities, and institutions and officials of government are legitimate targets for strikes. Which of these one targets depends on the nature of the enemy. Vulnerability of a target depends on several factors: size, location, speed, signature, hardening, personal protection detachments, surrounding environment and other factors. Much as a sniper aims for "one shot, one kill" in a hostage situation by aiming for the brain of the terrorist, a BRILLIANT STILETTO strike aiming for decapitation hits the threat leadership's critical C4I2 facilities, and decision-making and decision-transmission infrastructure. Decapitation equates to targeting the leadership system; it is differentiated from any other critical system strike due to the political nature of the target, as well as the ability of this

*one* system to control *all* of the systems and operations. It is figuratively the head of the dragon. The desired end state is the neutralization of the foe through destruction of its *directive element*.

A persistent myth held even by some professional officers is that targeting an enemy leader is tantamount to assassination or is by definition assassination. This is not the case morally or legally. Memorandum of Law: Executive Order 12333 and Assassination specifically addresses this issue.<sup>44</sup> The myth remains persistent, nevertheless, and this may be attributed in large measure to confusion as to the legal definition of a combatant.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, in the past the long delay in transmission of orders rarely made the head of state a legitimate military target unless actually participating in controlling the battle on the battlefield, like Napoleon. This has all changed with the advent of precision-guided munitions and digitized communications and intelligence assets. Heads of state can now, thanks to communications technology, be combatants and legitimate military targets. Recent examples of threat leadership targeting, such as EL DORADO CANYON, may be harbingers of the increasing acceptance, both public and professional, of such strikes in future war. The need to stop rogue tyrants early, especially in light of the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), will increasingly contribute in exceptional cases to international and domestic acceptance of targeting threat political leadership. In short, combatant enemy leaders are now, and will remain, legitimate and in some cases perhaps even popularly-supported military targets.<sup>46</sup>

Leaders make decisions and policy, but a BRILLIANT STILETTO operation aiming to achieve decapitation need not solely target threat leadership, if at all. In fact, the survival of threat leadership may be desirable. The threat leader faced with the destruction of his ability to launch or control his forces may be embarrassed, and even challenged, within his own State and power elite. In the aftermath of a preemptive strike his goal may be simple survival. Military defeat, discredit, and confusion provide a golden chance for ambitious men to mount a *coup d'etat*. Before *directly* targeting threat leadership, the potential to *destabilize* the enemy leader in this fashion should be

considered; the advantage accrued is a degree of distance from his potential fall from power or martyrdom.

In other instances, the immediate removal of key threat leadership from a position of authority may be desirable; a recent example of this situation was the aborted combat operations portion of OPERATION UPHOLD DEMOCRACY, where the regime of Haitian strongman General Raoul Cedras was the planned target. An unpopular regime focussing on oppressing its people internally and directing their frustration to "foreign enemies" in a campaign of hate is a dangerous actor in the international system. Depending on the feelings of its people and various elites, the simple solution of deposing the threat leadership may allow legitimate opposition parties to defuse a crisis within their own government and restore the State to good standing with other members of the international system.

Facilities are key to threat leadership, especially civilian media and government transmitters. C4I2 facilities and infrastructure are excellent targets for BRILLIANT STILETTO operations aiming at decapitation. The requirement is to halt the transmission of direction, or command and control, from the enemy leadership to the enemy force: from the decision system to the execution system. The ways of accomplishing this are as varied as the number of potential enemies. Non-lethal means and ways may be even more effective and efficient than lethal ones; for example, jamming may prevent transmission of enemy orders and thus allow BRILLIANT STILETTO forces to accomplish other missions.

Upon analysis, some characteristics of States where decapitation would be most likely to succeed are apparent. Examples of the characteristics of States ripe for a BRILLIANT STILETTO decapitation strike are:

1. A centralized decision-making authority, with an inculcated lack of initiative in subordinates. The complete consolidation of power in the hands of a small power elite simplifies the targeting process.
2. The lack of an heir or deputy; however, an exceptionally weak heir or deputy may prove even better because of the prevention of immediate ascension to power of a strong lieutenant.

3. The presence of ambitious, corrupt lieutenants, with a high probability of political and military in-fighting to fill the power vacuum in the wake of decapitation.

4. A lack of bureaucracies or institutions to perpetuate established policy.

5. A clear order and probability of succession, when the deputy or heir apparent shows considerable promise of being more cooperative. The installation of a more conciliatory deputy or heir into power may change the nature of the threat and defuse a crisis, if done discreetly. The deputy or heir may be even be enticed to accept covert US intervention if convinced that his action is in the best interests of his State, and himself. Another angle to exploit may be that if he does not act in concert with friendly forces for the good of his own State, his political rivals will.

6. The presence of an organized and popular government in exile.

7. An organized and popular opposition party that is capable of assuming and holding power.

8. A situation where the targeted State is isolated: a pariah nation in the international security environment, with no or very few allies.

9. A State where the populace has access to the international media and is vulnerable to information operations.

From the above considerations emerges a general rule: the greater the concentration of power in one man, the more lucrative he is as a target for a BRILLIANT STILETTO decapitation strike. The concentration of power into the hands of a small elite leads to the development of a center of gravity that is an excellent strike target.

Similarly, there are characteristics of States where decapitation would likely fail. Some of these characteristics are:

1. A highly distributed power base.

2. A very popular, charismatic leader.

3. A State where martyrs, religious or otherwise, are revered.

4. A clearly established order of succession exists, with competent, honest, and popular leaders in line.

5. A State that has a tradition of “strong men” as rulers, and where there exists a strong deputy or heir.



6. The presence of a firmly established bureaucracy and solid institutions to perpetuate policy.

7. The lack of an organized or popular opposition.

8. A high degree of isolation of the populace from the outside world.

In examining decapitation it is clear that it does not equate to assassination, nor does it target specific individuals, *per se*. Positional power and involvement in hostile activity are the determining criteria for such targeting. Threat leadership can be a legitimate military target, and strike operations against leadership should be exercised where there is a fair chance of success. Facilities are also key to exercising control, and preemption of a threat is possible through the decapitation of its C4I2 facilities as well.

The true target of a strike aiming at decapitation is the decision-making and decision-transmission infrastructure. Sub-lethal means and ways may suffice to disrupt this system enough to achieve preemption of a threat. Decapitation is chiefly differentiated from other system strikes by the political nature of its target, and the ability of its targeted leadership system to control all other threat systems.

Much misunderstanding surrounds the concept of strikes aiming at decapitation. Although the topic is heavily-laden with emotionalism, it is a legitimate and legal form of strike. When presented with a legal and morally justifiable option to preempt a threat, refusal of it based on such emotionalism is an abrogation of duty.

### **On Coup de Main**

The BRILLIANT STILETTO *Coup de Main* is the ultimate preemptive strike operation, potentially incorporating all of the preceding preemptive strike operations in one overarching attack. Its goal is to paralyze a hostile State using multiple, simultaneous tactical strikes and thus achieve preemption of a threat. It is inherently the most complex of the BRILLIANT STILETTO operations. It is primarily a strike against a superstructure where the integration of subsystems itself comprises a system, either for domestic governance or the exercise of specific policies in the international security environment.

A long-running confrontation between the United States and Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega came to a head on 16 December 1989. On that date Marine First Lieutenant Robert Paz was shot to death by members of the Panamanian Defense Forces. In the wake of what proved to be the climactic event after over two years of heightened tension and conflict, President Bush ordered the invasion of Panama. In the early morning hours of 20 December 1989, US forces attacked nearly thirty military and political targets simultaneously. In a stunning *coup de main* a dictatorship was ended, a lawfully-elected government installed, and a threat to American interests neutralized. The first BRILLIANT STILETTO *coup de main* had taken place, and OPERATION JUST CAUSE assumed its place in history as the harbinger of what future warfare is even now becoming.<sup>47</sup>

Joint Pub 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, defines *coup de main* as an “offensive operation that capitalizes on surprise and simultaneous execution of supporting operations to achieve success in one swift stroke.”<sup>48</sup> A traditional *coup de main* relies on numerical superiority to simultaneously defeat multiple targets that are geographically dispersed. A BRILLIANT STILETTO *coup de main* through superior targeting, technology, and intelligence can achieve the same effect with a smaller force. Any *coup de main*, however, targets more than one element of the State, usually at least the government and the armed forces.

In determining whether to mount a BRILLIANT STILETTO *coup de main*, the overriding concern is to achieve preemption of the threat with the best choice of force size, composition, and targeting. This does not equate to the least amount of force, as prescriptions of “just enough force” are invitations to disaster. Overwhelming force quickly and violently applied will result in more rapid capitulation and possibly far fewer casualties on both sides than a sequential application of force incrementally portioned out.<sup>49</sup> When possible, however, operations short of a *coup de main* should be employed if they are sufficient to achieve preemption. This will not always be the case with large or geographically diffused threats. In exceptional cases preemption of a threat will only be possible by attacking the State itself, as opposed to critical systems or key leaders.

In determining what to strike, Clausewitz’s trinity is the macro-level guide to

what constitutes war, and to great extent the pillars of power of any State:

“War is more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case. As a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies always make war a paradoxical trinity - composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.

The first of these three aspects mainly concerns the people; the second the commander and his army; the third the government.”<sup>50</sup>

To preempt a threat State swiftly, all three elements of the trinity ideally must be successfully targeted. The means and ways of targeting and attacking vary with each element of the trinity, as well as from situation to situation. Generally speaking, the threat commander and his army must be targeted with force; the threat people should be targeted with propaganda and other information operations; and the threat government targeted with force and coercion. The end is to preempt the threat State by paralyzing it.

Just as not all situations require a full *coup de main*, not all States are good candidates for a BRILLIANT STILETTO *coup de main*. In Coup d’Etat: A Practical Handbook, Edward Luttwak identifies three preconditions which make a State vulnerable to a *coup d’etat*.<sup>51</sup> The first is that the “social and economic conditions of the target country must be such as to confine political participation to a small fraction of the population”; the second is that the “target state must be substantially independent and the influence of foreign powers in its internal political life must be relatively limited”; and lastly, the “target state must have a political center.”<sup>52</sup> Without explicitly citing Clausewitz, Luttwak has paralleled in his three preconditions of a State ripe for a *coup d’etat* the three Clausewitzian elements of the trinity: the people in his consideration of their lack of involvement in the governing of the State, the commander and his army in the consideration of the independence of power and freedom from military influence by an external actor, and the government in his expression of the need for a political center. When coupled with the presence of Luttwak’s preconditions for a *coup d’etat*, the Clausewitzian trinity is the targeting model for BRILLIANT STILETTO *coup de main* strikes on the macro-level, *par excellence*. Each of the trinity’s elements will, of course, be vulnerable to different means and tactics. The people offer the clearest example.

Targeting the people with violent means makes no sense in a preemptive strike; the means that can be successfully applied to the people are information operations, such as PSYOPS. In contrast, PSYOPS appropriate to targeting the people may be of negligible value in targeting the members of the power elite, or political center, personally. They will remain convinced of the desirability that they remain in power.

Although he was specifically addressing a *coup d'etat*, Luttwak's considerations are relevant to the planning of a *coup de main* as well. Essentially the means, ways, and ends of a *coup d'etat* can be directly compared with those of a *coup de main*, with the exception that the instigators of a *coup d'etat* are acting from within the State, and the perpetrators, or liberators, participating in a *coup de main* are members of an external actor.

Given its nature, targets, means, ways, and ends the *coup de main* can be depicted graphically:

<b>BRILLIANT STILETTO Coup de Main</b>			
	<b>Targeted Elements</b>		
	<b>Army</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>People</b>
<b>Means</b>	➤ BRILLIANT STILETTO Forces	➤ BRILLIANT STILETTO Forces ➤ Information Operations ➤ Select Units	➤ Information Operations ➤ Indigenous Opposition Parties
<b>Ways</b>	➤ Critical Link Strike ➤ Interception ➤ Ambush ➤ Decapitation	➤ Capture ➤ Cooption ➤ Destruction ➤ Removal	➤ Mass Media ➤ Public Relations ➤ Indigenous Opposition Party Activities
<b>Desired End</b>	➤ Enemy forces coopted or destroyed	➤ Installation of cooperative government and inability of hostile government to act	➤ Passive or supportive public
<b>Typical Operation, Event, or Activity</b>	➤ Airfield/Port Seizure ➤ Raids ➤ Deliberate Attacks ➤ Road Blocks ➤ Curfew Enforcement ➤ Key Facility Seizure	➤ Key Individual Capture ➤ Key Facility Seizure ➤ Deliberate Attack ➤ C4I2 Warfare	➤ Printed Press distribution ➤ Television Interviews ➤ Radio Announcements ➤ Indigenous Opposition Party rallies
<b>Table 1</b>			

The most obvious element of the trinity to target during a *coup de main* is the threat military structure. In developing the target list of threat forces and facilities, the operations planned should correspond to the BRILLIANT STILETTO operations of interception, ambush, critical link strike, or decapitation. Every *direct action* mission must adhere to the targeting considerations inherent to these four types of strikes; failure to qualify as one of these four specific BRILLIANT STILETTO preemptive strike missions is indicative of a direct action target that is unnecessary for the initial success of the *coup de main*.<sup>53</sup> There may be external factors, perhaps political, that would compel the targeting and execution of missions outside the scope of BRILLIANT STILETTO strikes, but it is important to recognize these as exceptions dictated by factors other than those required for the initial strict success of a *coup de main*.

In targeting threat military forces during a BRILLIANT STILETTO *coup de main*, it is important to neutralize all forces that may influence the immediate success of the strike, leaving threat forces not immediately relevant for subsequent follow-on strikes as needed. The basic concept is that an enemy force is relevant and must be targeted if it can potentially influence the conduct of the *coup de main*.<sup>54</sup> The scope of a *coup de main's* post-strike operations and degree of continued friendly involvement will also determine the relevancy of threat forces. If the desired end is simply to preempt a threat, there may be a limited number of post-strike operations planned and even those confined to information operations to justify friendly action and enhance the image of the strike for an international audience. In this case, threat forces unable to respond within the planned strike window are irrelevant for targeting, and the power vacuum following a *coup de main* is not viewed as a concern.<sup>55</sup> However, in a situation where post-strike operations envisioned run the gamut from installing a new government, *ex post facto* legitimization of it, and Foreign Internal Defense in support of it, the list of forces necessary to target will be longer and farther reaching.<sup>56</sup>

The enemy military forces targeted depend on the specific case, but as a minimum the armed forces, police, and security agencies should all be considered by BRILLIANT STILETTO planners. Other groups, including paramilitary organizations and provincial militia may also be candidates for strike targeting. Those groups that are armed,

organized, and capable of forming a core of opposition must be neutralized.<sup>57</sup> Within the armed forces, police, and security agencies there will exist a mixture of “hard” and “soft” targets, or units. Combat forces should be considered “hard” units, while administrative personnel can be considered “soft” targets. Both types of forces must be neutralized as they can pose a threat, but the “hard” targets should receive the priority of effort as they are the most dangerous.

Friendly forces must secure important military and civilian facilities, such as airports, depots, communication nodes, radar stations, or armories at the start of the execution phase of the *coup de main*. If they are necessary for protracted operations, they should be occupied by BRILLIANT STILETTO forces until relieved in place by follow-on friendly units, or pro-*coup* indigenous troops. All facilities that are critical to the threat’s ability to gain early warning, fight, or flee must be targeted. The ability to arm or establish caches of weapons must especially be precluded early to prevent the emergence of a well-equipped guerrilla force.

When targeting the second element of the trinity, the threat government, specific strike targets will either be individuals or facilities. The purpose is not necessarily destruction of these targets as they may be vital to the friendly success of the *coup de main*, but rather preventing their employment in support of the threat. The sole government television station, for instance, may be a valuable asset for BRILLIANT STILETTO forces in conducting PSYOPS, and its destruction through either friendly or threat activity a significant loss.

Government individuals who must be considered for targeting by friendly planners can be divided into four categories: the head of state and line of succession, the “inner circle,” top political-military leadership, and quasi-governmental personalities.<sup>58</sup> In apprehending key individuals it is also necessary to take their families into safe-keeping as well, for several reasons: 1. to prevent the emergence of an opposition movement based around an heir-apparent family member; 2. to prevent the implementation of threat contingency plans known to family members; 3. to prevent the escape of critical information; 4. to create uncertainty in the minds of threat leaders still at large, and thus deter them from hostile activity; 5. to prevent the advancement of

threat information warfare objectives based on deliberately false accounts of friendly operations; and 6. to protect the detainee's family from retribution by newly liberated masses, or others intent on harming members of the former regime.

The categorization of targeted individuals is a starting point for BRILLIANT STILETTO planners and may be more or less inclusive. The head of state and his line of succession is an obvious choice for targeting, as is their "inner circle" of advisors. Any active participant in the ruling power elite is capable of fomenting direct and indirect resistance through long-established networks of colleagues and subordinates, and has access through this network to the requisite resources and assets in emergency stocks and warehouses still undiscovered by BRILLIANT STILETTO forces. The category of top political-military leadership is another critical group of individuals to target, with an additional incentive for their rapid capture; they are, unlike the head of state and his advisors, well versed in military operations and conditioned to making military decisions and giving orders. The failure to target this group successfully could be worse than failing to capture the head of state. It is unlikely the head of state and his circle of political advisors dealt directly with the commanders of threat military units, but the top military leaders will certainly be intimately familiar with their major force dispositions and locations and on friendly relations with the commanders. Lastly, individuals who enjoy some measure of power, popularity, or influence but who are not in the government proper must be targeted as well. These individuals may have been perhaps office holders or senior officers retired from military service but still able to activate old and existing networks of influence to organize a resistance movement.

There are three types of government facilities that must be destroyed or seized during a BRILLIANT STILETTO *coup de main*. They are: 1. critical political infrastructure; 2. critical facilities of the instruments of power; and 3. symbolic structures.<sup>59</sup>

The critical political infrastructure includes the physical facilities that enable the targeted threat political leadership to function. This includes official and private residences of the threat leadership, office buildings, classified information repositories and storage facilities, official limousines and airplanes, helipads and official airports,

dedicated C4I2 nodes, alternate command posts and vehicles, buildings housing the political branches and institutions, and any other facilities that are critical for the formulation, approval, and transmission of policy directives and orders.

The critical facilities of the instruments of power comprise the targets in the second category. The military, diplomatic, economic and information ministries of the threat State exercise their influence through these facilities, and the capture or destruction of them, in conjunction with other targets, will render the threat impotent by denying it the tools it needs to control assets and forces. There will be common target selections between the different ministries, as well as with the political infrastructure targeting, and supervision is necessary to ensure that all critical sites in both categories are targeted without unnecessary redundancy of strike asset allocation. A facility that is identified under multiple targeting categories need only be targeted once.<sup>60</sup>

Critical facilities of the different instruments of power closely interact with each other. Their ability to communicate vertically and horizontally is a priority target for strike operations. Denial of communications will contribute to the isolation of all components of the threat State's instruments of power, in effect dividing them and rendering any activity they do manage to conduct unsynchronized and ineffective. The economic ministry, denied its access to administrative tools and records, is incapable of coordinating the transfer or withdrawal of financial assets. The information ministry, unable to access its facilities for transmission of the threat State's message, can only tell its story to those journalists who will listen in the streets, should any of its spokesmen still be at large to do even that. BRILLIANT STILETTO forces render the ministry of defense irrelevant by destroying or neutralizing its methods of communicating instructions and orders. The foreign-based portion of the enemy State's diplomatic corps will be hesitant to make policy pronouncements without first checking with the State-based power elite. The internment of key individuals and decision-makers adds to the confusion, resulting in uncertainty and hesitation. Effectively isolated from each other, and unable to coordinate even their own internal activities, the BRILLIANT STILETTO *coup de main* paralyzes all the foe's instruments of power and the threat State falls.



Symbolic structures is the last category of targeted government facilities. These are not, *per se*, necessary or sufficient for the success of the *coup de main*. However, they will assist immeasurably in the post-strike information operations, in contributing to the *ex post facto* legitimization of the *coup de main* and in preventing the emergence of persistent challenges to a newly installed government's authority. Examples would include the stationing of troops loyal to the new government at a "tomb for an unknown soldier"; national monuments; tombs and statues of popular historical figures; national museums, parliamentary buildings, supreme courts, and other similar structures. This attention to symbolic structures conveys a semblance of normality and order in the wake of the BRILLIANT STILETTO *coup de main* and sends a message through the international media that the strike has been successful on a national scale. The presence of forces loyal to the *former* threat State at national treasures and monuments would suggest that the BRILLIANT STILETTO forces, and by extension the new government, have not been completely successful and could prove to be potent rallying points for the formation of opposition. A recent historical example is the 19-21 August 1991 failure of the hard-core Soviet *coup* leaders during their attempt to overthrow Soviet President Gorbachev. The failure to occupy the Russian parliament building, known as the "White House," allowed a symbolic stand of loyal forces literally within view of CNN cameras positioned on a nearby building's roof. This enabled pro-Gorbachev forces to rally not only around a powerful symbol of Mother Russia, but also around the powerful personality of the Russian Republic's President Yeltsin. Had the *coup* plotters moved decisively to occupy all such structures of symbolic import, and interned all quasi-governmental personalities and officials, they may have been successful. The martyrs of the Russian White House had reached a point at one stage where their only true military significance was as a symbol of defiance and opposition; but during a crisis symbols are powerful things. BRILLIANT STILETTO forces must deny a similar talisman to invoke immediately following the strike, or in a later protracted guerrilla war.

Should post-strike operations be planned with a long-term goal of the installation and stability of a new government, it will be necessary to target the third element of the trinity - the people. Direct action BRILLIANT STILETTO operations are incapable of

constructive efforts in this arena. Targeting the people is solely the purview of information operations during the conduct of a BRILLIANT STILETTO *coup de main*. Although direct action can forcibly install a government, its later survival will depend ultimately upon the support of its people. For this reason, it is necessary to have a shadow government of indigenous, and popular, “leaders-in-exile” waiting to assume control during the *coup*. Information operations should explicitly and energetically portray the activities of the BRILLIANT STILETTO forces as responsive to this new government to lend credibility and legitimacy to the operation. Immediate installation of the shadow government, and the early dissemination of this accomplishment through information operations, will greatly contribute to the return of order to the State. A fair public trial, and if found guilty rapid sentencing, of the deposed threat leadership will also contribute to cementing the reality of the *fait accompli*. It is important that the population perceive the *coup de main* as the fruition of the work and efforts of the indigenous political opposition, where possible. If an indigenous opposition party does not exist, information operations may have to present the *coup de main* as the liberation of an enslaved State through the benevolent and benign intervention of an international coalition of democratic States. Where the intervention is unilateral, the message’s portrayal will be fundamentally the same. Information operations alone can successfully target a population to support, or passively accept, a BRILLIANT STILETTO *coup de main*.

The BRILLIANT STILETTO *coup de main* is the ultimate strike operation. It may incorporate all of the BRILLIANT STILETTO operations into a single preemptive attack designed to protect and further friendly interests. Its post-strike scope and goals, as well as the level of force required to achieve preemption, determine the size, composition, and operations of the BRILLIANT STILETTO forces. The macro-level guide to targeting a threat State for a BRILLIANT STILETTO *coup de main* is Clausewitz’s trinity describing the elements of war and their corresponding elements within the State. Each of these elements requires different means and ways for effective targeting. The two basic categories of targets suitable for direct action are individuals and facilities. Within the category of individuals, there are four subcategories: the head

of state and his line of succession, the "inner circle," top political-military leadership, and quasi-governmental personalities. Within the category of facilities there exist three subdivisions: critical political infrastructure, critical facilities of the instruments of power, and symbolic structures. In planning a BRILLIANT STILETTO *coup de main* these targeting guidelines will enhance the chances for success, while maintaining a disciplined focus on the objective.

### Conclusion

This monograph has outlined a tactic whose essential premise is that preemption of an imminent threat is better than "awaiting the blow."<sup>61</sup> It is a radical concept, fraught with risk. It is contrary to the past American way of war and as such represents an antithesis to the comfortable thesis of the Cold War force structure, doctrine, and mindset. It argues that tactical strikes can be categorized into five types: interception, ambush, decapitation, critical link strike, and *coup de main*, and that relatively small, conventional forces can achieve preemption when supported with real-time, high quality intelligence, and armed with state-of-the-art digital communications and advanced weapons systems.

Implicit in the argument is the *a priori* assumption that a threat can be detected. The massing of tanks during the Cold War was easily documented by intelligence assets. The threat was apparent. In the fundamentally altered security environment of a multipolar world threats will prove far more subtle...and dangerous. It is still too early to say, for instance, how many masters the nuclear genie may ultimately serve. It is improbable, however, they will all prove as rational and responsible with their nuclear devices as the former Soviet Union. If such threats can be detected, the temptation and valid reasons to preempt them will prove very strong, indeed.

This monograph is, again, an antithesis. The need, now, for Hegel's dialectic in designing a new security paradigm is evident to even a casual reader of a daily paper. Radical change and revolutionary thought is required to ensure future threats can be countered. The Cold War is over; a new war is coming.

Preemptive strikes can successfully protect and further friendly interests in this multipolar security environment. The objections to preemption as an acceptable tactic are deep-seated and often emotional; many have seen the validity of more conservative doctrines confirmed in the most trying of combat conditions and are understandably reluctant to embrace a new concept. A coming war fought by our forces will judge the wisdom of this resistance to change.

There is an old saying that there are no solutions, only new problems. The five BRILLIANT STILETTO operations may not be the definitive answer to all the future military problems we will face, but they hold great promise as useful tools in dealing with at least some of them. In any event, it is unlikely that past doctrines will completely pertain to the fundamentally altered environment in which they must now operate and the future enemy they will encounter. When the environment in which forces fight changes, doctrine must also change. Future war cannot be forecast perfectly, but the alternative is to maintain a complacent status quo in the face of change, and this leads to the age old mistake of fighting the last war.

## Appendix A: On Counterforce and Countersystem Strikes

In examining the five types of BRILLIANT STILETTO operations, one characteristic of each is the degree of activity exercised by the enemy. For instance, the *coup de main*, decapitation, and critical link strike operations are targeted against an enemy that may not be active to a significant degree. The ambush and interception operations, however, are targeted against an active threat force that is moving.

This degree of enemy activity yields a preferential order of BRILLIANT STILETTO missions, roughly dividing the preferred category into operations against a passive enemy and the least preferred category targeted against an active enemy. This priority conforms to how easily a threat can be targeted and engaged. Operations directed against a static, or passive, enemy increase the chances of success and simplify the entire scenario. The resultant danger from a failed BRILLIANT STILETTO operation is also much less against a static enemy than against an enemy force that has already launched. The first case may allow for another attempt at preemption. The second case allows an active enemy force to continue its mission, forewarned that it has been discovered.

On further analysis another factor becomes apparent. The ambush and interception BRILLIANT STILETTO operations are targeted against forces. For the most part, however, the *coup de main*, decapitation, and critical link strike operations are targeted against systems. This is not a “pure” characteristic; obviously enemy forces will exist in all situations, or else there would be no threat “weapon.” But as a principal difference, to achieve preemption forces are targeted in one category and systems in another.<sup>62</sup>

Normally the countersystem strikes will be easier to perform than the counterforce strikes. This is true not only because systems are relatively static (the consideration of the degree of activity), but because they are also generally more vulnerable than enemy forces enroute to their targets.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, a system's vulnerability increases as its complexity increases, given *ceteris paribus* of all other considerations.<sup>64</sup> Targeting forces, on the other hand, is more difficult. Forces are

dynamic and capable of self-defense, and generally the larger the force the more survivable it is. From this we can distill a rule of thumb: from a pragmatic view, although perhaps not a political one, *it is better to strike systems before threat forces are launched than to try to target forces after they are launched*. Therefore, the BRILLIANT STILETTO operations of ambush and interception should strictly be viewed as branches should countersystem strikes either fail, or be inadvisable or impossible.<sup>65</sup> This highlights the need for early warning of a threat's capabilities and intentions and, more problematic, the early acceptance of the preemption option by decision-makers.

Additionally, the ability to conduct either a counterforce or a countersystem strike corresponds roughly to the amount of warning time available, disregarding possible constraints from other factors.<sup>66</sup> Although not as easy or desirable as targeting a system, *the targeting of forces is made necessary when the enemy has either already launched, or the warning time before the launching of the threat is so short that attacking a system will not stop it*.

As desirable as countersystem strikes are, it is unlikely that they will comprise the majority of BRILLIANT STILETTO strikes executed. This is because the decision whether to conduct them demands a level of certainty from intelligence that is unlikely to be available; or if available, it will not be believed or acted on by political decision makers.<sup>67</sup>

The ironic paradox is that the BRILLIANT STILETTO strikes most likely to succeed - countersystem strikes - are least likely to be ordered early enough to accomplish preemption. This is solely attributable, rightfully, to political considerations outweighing military reasoning.<sup>68</sup> Policy makers will perhaps hope that their analysts are wrong, that the enemy will change his mind, that the situation has been misunderstood, or that if they do nothing to provoke the threat, it will prove to be benign. It is only when the threat is conducting hostile action that hostile intent can be ascribed to the enemy with perfect certainty. Perhaps the only exception to such political indecision would be the belief of an intelligence asset of exceptional reliability, trustworthiness, and quality that has access to the inner circle of enemy policy makers.

After analysis, the BRILLIANT STILETTO operations' most basic characteristics can be outlined in the table below:

Operation	Category	Threat	BRILLIANT STILETTO Forces
Ambush	Counterforce	moving/active*	stationary/passive
Interception	Counterforce	moving/active	moving/active
<i>Coup de Main</i>	Countersystem	stationary/passive	moving/active
Decapitation	Countersystem	stationary/passive	moving/active
Critical Link Strike	Countersystem	stationary/passive	moving/active
<b>Table 2</b>			

In short, the five types of BRILLIANT STILETTO missions can be separated into two categories (counterforce and countersystem strikes) that are targeted against enemy forces that are either active or passive. Again, a purist distinction that strictly delineates separations between categories is flawed. There are too many overlapping factors to type-quantify either category too rigidly. Also, a single operation may include more than one type of strike. Nevertheless, these distinctions are useful in analyzing broad characteristics for employment and planning. As a guiding principle for planners BRILLIANT STILETTO countersystem strikes are preferable to counterforce strikes, barring the need to exercise specific attributes of counterforce strikes and given a political decision to preempt. Finally, in planning which BRILLIANT STILETTO operation to exercise, available warning time will dictate feasible options.

## **Appendix B: On the Counterargument to BRILLIANT STILETTO**

The most eloquent and powerful, albeit flawed, argument that could be advanced against the concept of BRILLIANT STILETTO would, in fact, be a deliberate misuse of Brigadier General Bidwell's Five Fallacies. General Bidwell's original codification of the Five Fallacies of war is:

"The first of these [fallacies] may be called 'miniaturism', or the 'David and Goliath' fallacy. No truth has been more resolutely ignored in British thinking than that a big good army will always beat a small good army.

The second is closely allied to the first, and is the fallacy of the magic weapon. The tank was, briefly, a magic weapon, and there have been signs of tactical or battlefield nuclear weapons being elevated to this position.

The third is the 'chess' fallacy. Here we have the clearest example of not merely a valid but essential approach to the study of war becoming distorted by wishful thinking. The object of grand tactics; that is to say the direct or indirect approach, the attack on the rear or the flank, surprise, the concentrated attack on separate fractions of the enemy, infiltration, and so on, is to give one's own soldiers the best possible chance in the decisive combat that must be the culmination of manoeuvre. The 'chess' fallacy elevates the manoeuvre to the decisive factor, as if wars were won by shadow-boxing. (Like that degenerate art of Malay self-defense called 'bersilat', which appears to consist of agile moves and menacing gestures.)

The fourth is a dependent of the third, and is the fallacy of the bloodless operation. Nothing is more disgusting to read of than the slaughter in the breach at Badajoz or in front of, say, Thiepval, in 1916, and no British commander could, or would, dare to sacrifice troops on the scale which would be unhesitatingly accepted by a Russian or an American army. It is, however, mere self-deception to believe that a hard fight can be anything but costly.

The fifth, which is also a dependent of the third, is the fallacy of the passive enemy. Why should it be assumed in the face of all military history that good troops whose headquarters has been captured or neutralized, whose supply line has been cut, and who have been outflanked or surrounded, or who have been faced with some novel method of war, will tamely give in?"<sup>69</sup>



Bidwell's first fallacy deals with the myth of miniaturism. In a war of exhaustion between symmetrical armies, the bigger battalions have the advantage. But BRILLIANT STILETTO is neither a tactic of exhaustion, nor does it pit a symmetrical friendly force against the enemy. It is a tactic of annihilation, and achieves asymmetrical mass at the decisive point using fires, non-lethal weapons, speed, surprise, deception, and high-technology weapon systems.<sup>70</sup>

The second fallacy is the mirage of the magic weapon. For every innovation introduced by one side in a war, the other side will soon develop its own capability and counters.<sup>71</sup> The reliance on a single weapon, tactic, or system is at best a temporary advantage, and at worse a dependency open to exploitation by the enemy. BRILLIANT STILETTO, however, is not a single weapon or tactic. It can be executed by submarines, helicopters, or individual operators. It also incorporates five different types of operations, with innumerable permutations based on differing combinations of them and specific threat situations. In short, BRILLIANT STILETTO is very flexible in its ability to adapt its means and ways to achieve the desired end.

The third illusion mentioned by Bidwell is the misperception of combat as "chess." He argues, correctly, that superior maneuver by one side is not a sufficient condition for victory. BRILLIANT STILETTO demands agile maneuver, but not as an end in itself. The very purpose of agility in BRILLIANT STILETTO forces is to deliver force against the target. Strike operations are inherently designed to *strike*, not solely to move. The fascination with maneuver that Bidwell is addressing is not the essence, spirit, or focus of BRILLIANT STILETTO preemptive strikes.

The fourth fallacy is the "bloodless operation." Except for the exercise of non-lethal means and ways in a specific situation, BRILLIANT STILETTO operations are consummated in blood and iron. The purpose of real-time intelligence, agile forces, and advanced technology weapons is to strike the enemy and destroy the threat before it attacks friendly interests. That is the core of preemption: destruction, usually violent, of the threat capability to harm friendly interests.

The fifth point raised by Bidwell is that of the "passive enemy." He makes the point that the enemy is unlikely to be defeated without first suffering major losses. In a

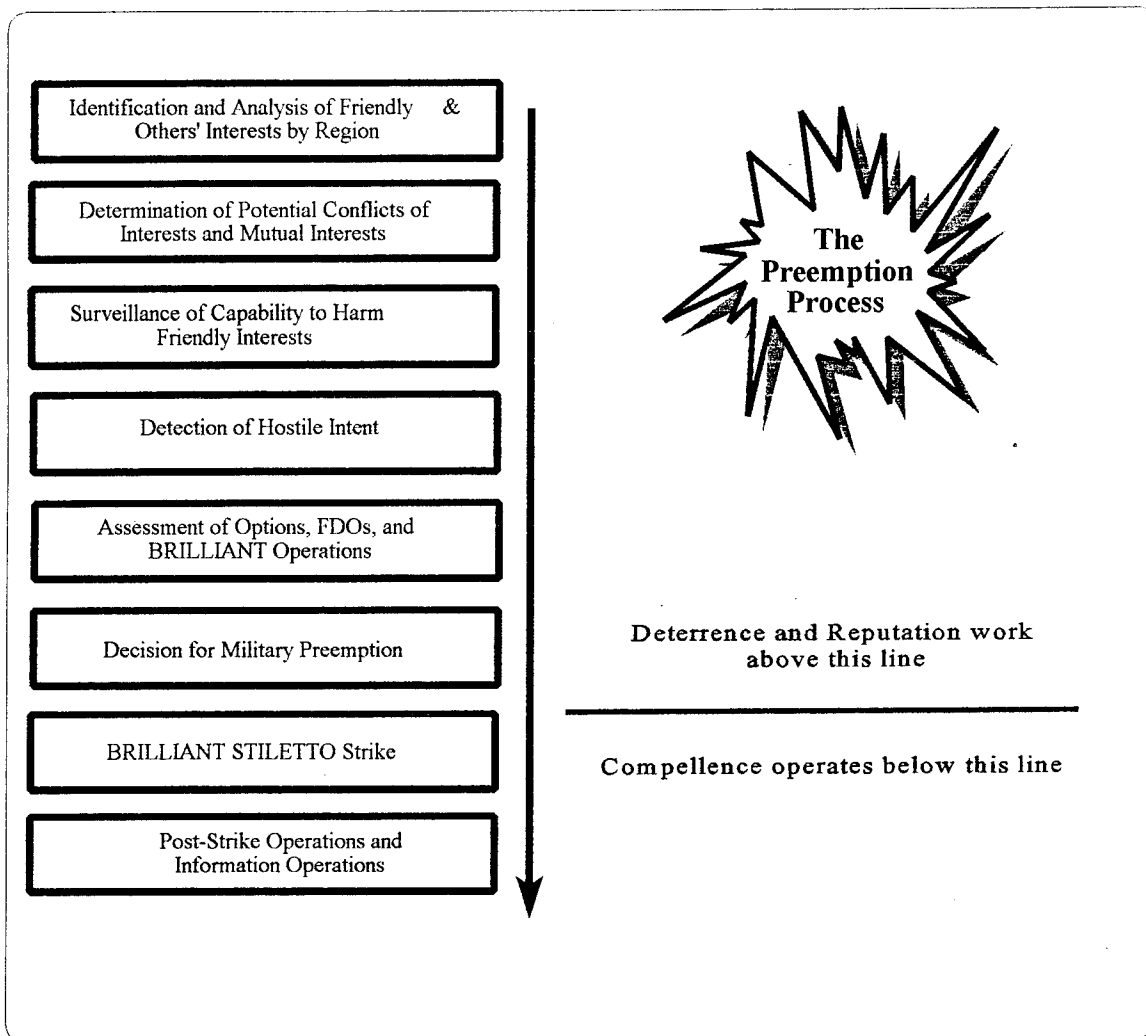
traditional context of war in Europe he may be correct. The loss of a single individual, or even a single tactical organization, is unlikely to halt an army. But defeating enemy armies is not the purpose of BRILLIANT STILETTO operations. BRILLIANT STILETTO is designed to preempt a threat, and a threat can be halted by the loss of a single *necessary* element. Destruction of a threat, if it is a large enemy formation, entails a massive application of force. But the loss of critical fuel depots, for example, can halt that same army, and that may be enough to give the enemy pause. Preemption is not aimed at the destruction of huge formations, it is aimed at the destruction of capabilities within a window of time. To destroy enemy forces across a broad band of time is not to conduct a strike operation, but to conduct conventional war.

### **Appendix C: On the Preemption Process Model**

The decision to launch a tactical preemptive strike is not a "stand-alone decision." It is the outcome of a process, as all rational decisions are the outcomes of a thought process. This monograph has approached the study of preemptive strikes as a subordinate part of a larger process. For instance, advocating a strike against an enemy that is a threat to one's interest implies that a previous step in the decision process was the identification of interests. This appendix presents a model of the preemption process that incorporates BRILLIANT STILETTO strikes as a subcomponent.

This monograph has dealt only with the seventh step in the model, the BRILLIANT STILETTO preemptive strikes. But options for preemption are not limited to military force. Preemptive options may exercise any of the instruments of power, or a combination of them in concert with each other. For example, the imposition of economic sanctions and increased diplomatic efforts may preempt a threat, or enhance the chances of success of planned military options. Although this monograph has dealt exclusively with military preemption, it is not the only instrument of preemption.

The figure below details this monograph's preemption process model. The economic, diplomatic, and informational options that may be exercised prior to or concurrent with the military option have been omitted to simplify the model.

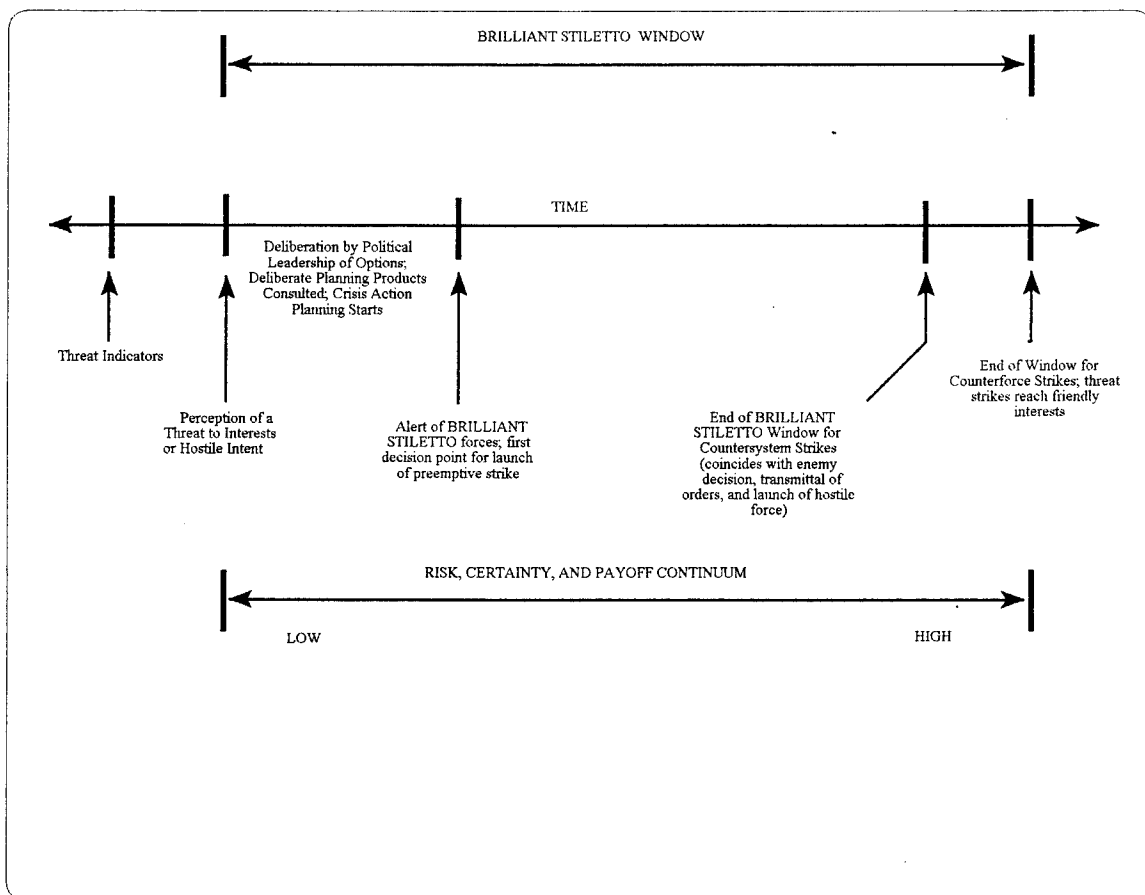


The Preemption Process Model

## Appendix D: On Time, Risk, Certainty, and Payoff

To preempt a threat, a State must first recognize it as a threat in time. In analyzing the preemption process model, the identification of both friendly and other States' interests gives insight into where conflicts of interests may occur, or where mutual interests exist. This process leads to surveillance of potential threat capabilities to harm friendly interests, and this surveillance is what is designed to provide early warning of a threat, the *sine qua non* of preemption.

The figure below outlines the continuums of time, risk, certainty, and payoff within which preemption can occur. It also defines the period of time when preemption is possible, termed the BRILLIANT STILETTO window:



Time, Risk, Certainty, and Payoff Continuums

The payoff is defined as the impact of the destruction of the threat's equipment, labor, forces, resources and other assets obtained by a preemptive strike. It also encompasses the potential to exploit the success of a preemptive strike for information operations. The longer the preemptive strike is withheld, the greater the payoff in destruction of threat forces, as the continued investment of resources in supporting and developing the threat force continues. The later the strike, the greater number of resources that may be destroyed.

Certainty refers to the degree of confirmation of threat indicators. Carried to the extreme of the continuum, certainty of the existence of a threat approaches the absolute immediately before the landing of the threat's blow. The earlier along the continuum, the less certain decision-makers will be as to the existence of a threat, discounting early indications as routine training exercises or threat actions attributable to other factors.

Risk increases as the end of the BRILLIANT STILETTO window is approached. The tension for decision-makers is inherent in their duty to minimize risk to their State, yet be certain that their contemplation of preemptive action is justified. The nearer the end of the continuum, the greater the risk due to the reduced time allowed to react to the threat. Delay in making the decision to preempt may result in only a sub-optimal course of action for a preemptive strike being possible, if any preemptive action is possible at all.

Calculation of the length of the BRILLIANT STILETTO window is based on the capabilities of the enemy, friendly potential to protect the threatened interest, and degree of success Flexible Deterrent Options (FDO) and the diplomatic, economic, and informational instruments of power may have in delaying threat preparation. These sister operations of BRILLIANT STILETTO also aim for preemption. Each compliments the others when exercised together in a coherent fashion.

## ENDNOTES

1. Joint Pub 1-02, DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, (Washington, D.C.: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, 23 March 1994), p. 295.
2. And the trend is increasingly towards ungovernability in the security environment. The faults may be civilizations, as Samuel P. Huntington argues, or they may be considerations of scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism, and disease as Robert D. Kaplan believes. In any event, instability is becoming the norm within which States are pursuing their interests. See Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilization?" Foreign Affairs, Vol. 72, No. 3, Summer 1993, pp. 22-49 and "If Not Civilizations, What?," Foreign Affairs Vol. 72, No. 5, November/December 1993, pp. 186-194; and Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," The Atlantic Monthly, February 1994, pp. 44-76.
3. METT-T stands for the planning considerations of mission, enemy, troops, terrain and weather, and time available. US Army Field Manual FM 100-5, Operations, Headquarters Department of the Army, (Washington, D.C.: June 1993), p. Index-6.
4. FM 100-5 defines sequel as "major operations that follow an initial major operation. Plans for sequels are based on the possible outcome - victory, stalemate, or defeat - of the current operation." p. G-8.
5. Joint Pub 1-02 defines general war as: "Armed conflict between major powers in which the total resources of the belligerents are employed, and the national survival of a major belligerent is in jeopardy." Joint Pub 1-02, DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, (Washington, D.C.: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, 23 March 1994), p. 159.
6. Joint Pub 1-02 defines the concepts of preemptive attack and preventive war as: preemptive attack: "An attack initiated on the basis of incontrovertible evidence that an enemy attack is imminent." and preventive war: "A war initiated in the belief that military conflict, while not imminent, is inevitable, and that to delay would involve greater risk." Preemptive attack is widely considered morally justifiable and a legal form of self-defense; justification of preventive war is problematic. pp. 295 and 298, respectively.
7. For one of the classical studies on *when* to use an asset to achieve surprise, see Robert Axelrod, The Rational Timing of Surprise, *World Politics*, vol. 31, January 1979, pp. 228-246. For an excellent presentation of deception operations, US Army Field Manual FM 90-2, Battlefield Deception, is one of the best attempts to capture the valuable lessons learned from World War II, and ranks with the best academic literature in its conciseness and organization of fundamentals and guidelines. US Army Field Manual FM 90-2, Battlefield Deception, (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 3 October 1988).
8. The definition of Information Operations in the draft version of FM 100-6, Information Operations, is that they are "...continuous combined arms operations that enable, enhance, and protect the commander's decision cycle and mission execution while influencing an opponent's.

These are accomplished through effective intelligence, command and control (C2), command and control warfare operations, and the global information environment (GIE) supported by all available friendly information systems." US Army Field Manual FM 100-6, Information Operations (Coordinating Draft), Headquarters United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, (Fort Monroe, Virginia, 22 July 1994), p. x.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 1-9.

10. Frank J. Stech, "Winning CNN Wars," Parameters, US Army War College Quarterly, vol. xxiv, no. 3, (Fort Carlisle, PA: Autumn 1994), p. 42.

11. "Power covers the domination of man by man, both when it is disciplined by moral ends and controlled by constitutional safeguards, as in Western democracies, and when it is that untamed and barbaric force which finds its laws in nothing but its own strength and its sole justification in its aggrandizement." Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace. 4th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), p. 9.

12. "...that supreme tribunal - force...To sum up: of all the possible aims in war, the destruction of the enemy's armed forces always appears as the highest." Carl von Clausewitz, On War, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds., (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 99.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 357.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 360.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 360.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 198.

18. Loren Jenkins, "U.S. Navy Jets Intercept Plane Carrying Ship Hijackers," The Washington Post, 11 October 1985.

19. In examining how BRILLIANT STILETTO operations are meant to accomplish preemption, it becomes clear that the strikes are exercising the concept of annihilation, vice that of exhaustion. The definitions of annihilation and exhaustion for the purposes of this paper follow the thoughts of Hans Delbrück: "The first form of warfare he named *Niederwerfungsstrategie* (the strategy of annihilation). Its sole aim was the decisive battle, and the commanding general was called upon only to estimate the possibility of fighting such a battle in a given situation. The second type of strategy Delbrück called...*Ermattungsstrategie* (the



strategy of exhaustion)...” Gordon A. Craig, “Delbrück: The Military Historian,” in Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age, ed. by Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 341. BRILLIANT STILETTO operations can, obviously, conduct preemptive strikes in the context of an on-going war of exhaustion though attrition, however, the master stroke and intent of preemption is to preclude a protracted war of exhaustion.

20. For a complete discussion of counterforce and countersystem strikes and their characteristics see Appendix A: On Counterforce and Countersystem Strikes.

21. For a graphic portrayal of the timing of preemptive options, see Appendix D: On Time, Risk, Certainty, and Payoff.

22. 1991 Britannica Book of the Year, (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1991), p. 408.

23. Robert Axelrod makes the point that the use of a valuable spy is more likely if he has a reasonable chance of maintaining his cover, “It is easy to extend the model to take account of the fact that when a resource [in this case, an inside source of information] for surprise is used, it still has some chance of surviving. For example, a double agent who is used to mislead an opponent may not be discredited the first time he gives false information.” *and* “If a resource for surprise is thought to have a chance of...survival when used..., then its use is less costly than if it were certain to be lost upon its first use.” p. 239 and p. 240, respectively. Robert Axelrod, “The Rational Timing of Surprise,” World Politics, vol. 31, January 1979, pp. 228-246.

24. James L. Stokesburg, A Short History of World War II, (New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1980), pp. 268-269.

25. Four of these criteria, criticality, vulnerability, threat, and recuperability are taken from the US Army’s Air Defense Artillery methodology of identifying friendly assets most in need of protection from enemy airstrikes and slightly modified to serve as guides to enemy vulnerability to preemptive strikes. US Army Field Manual 44-1, US Army Air Defense Artillery Employment, (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 9 May 1983), pp. 4-7 to 4-8.

26. An historical example of a preemptive strike against a developing threat system that had a subcomponent that was irreplaceable (the criteria of recuperability), was the Allied strike against the Norsk Hydro Plant during World War II already mentioned.

27. Perrow, Charles. Normal Accidents: Living with High-Risk Technologies, (New York: Basic Books, 1984), pp. 4-7.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 4-7, p. 92.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

36. Perrow does not use the terms *inter-systemic* or *intra-systemic*, but it is clear that systems both have interactions within themselves as well as with some exterior system, even if only the physical environment. I have included the distinction to emphasize the complexity of systemic interactions, as well as to highlight that BRILLIANT STILETTO strikes need not hit a system itself to render its performance irrelevant.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

41. Britannica Book of the Year: Events of 1992, (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1993), p. 163.

42. In BRILLIANT STILETTO targeting, the following statement by Perrow describes what to look for in a lucrative target: "To summarize, complex systems are characterized by: proximity of parts or units that are not in a production sequence; many common mode connections between components (parts, units, or subsystems) not in a production sequence; unfamiliar or unintended feedback loops; many control parameters with potential interactions; indirect or inferential information sources; and limited understanding of some processes." Perrow, Charles. Normal Accidents: Living with High-Risk Technologies, (New York: Basic Books, 1984), pp. 85-86.

43. Fred Hiatt, "U.S. F111 Jet Apparently Lost at Sea on Raid," The Washington Post, 15 April 1986.

44. The document Memorandum of Law: Executive Order 12333 and Assassination states that all combatants, civilian and uniformed, may be targeted for military purposes. Additionally, civilian noncombatants in or around legitimate military targets, if killed, are not the victims of assassination. The document is a technical legal treatment of the topic of assassination, and as

such is exceedingly rich in detail and scope. Perhaps the most helpful portion is the explicit citing of three examples, all targeting senior threat leaders, where military commando raids and aircraft interceptions were performed with the stated mission of killing these leaders. All are officially judged as not constituting assassination. The examples cited include: the 18 November 1941 commando raid at Bedda Littoria to kill German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel; the 18 April 1943 USAAF P-38 intercept and downing of Admiral Osoruku Yamamoto's aircraft over Bougainville; and the 30 October 1951 US Navy airstrike killing Chinese and North Korean personnel attending a military planning conference in Kapsan, North Korea. Memorandum of Law: Executive Order 12333 and Assassination, *The Army Lawyer*, Department of the Army Pamphlet 27-50-204, (December 1989), pp. 2-6.

45. The document Memorandum of Law: Executive Order 12333 and Assassination makes three key points regarding civilians considered combatants: "(a) Civilians who work within a military objective are at risk from attack during the times in which they are present within that objective, whether their injury or death is incidental to the attack of that military objective or results from their direct attack. Neither would be assassination. (b) The substitution of a civilian in a position or billet that normally would be occupied by a member of the military will not make that position immune from attack. (c) Finally, one rule of thumb with regard to the likelihood that an individual may be subject to lawful attack is his (or her) immunity from military service if continued service in his (or her) civilian position is of greater value to a nation's war effort than that person's service in the military." p. 4. The document also explicitly mentions that a head of state may be considered a lawful target. "While a civilian head of state who serves as commander-in-chief of the armed forces may be a lawful target (and his or her attack therefore would not constitute an act of assassination), as a matter of comity such attacks generally have been limited. As previously stated, the death of an individual incidental to the attack of a military objective would not constitute assassination." *ibid.*, p. 4.

46. Cold War targeting considerations, target folders, and target databases may prove to be useful models to develop similar planning tools for future conventional preemptive strikes aiming at decapitation. Detailed intelligence folders on threat heads of state may now direct small tactical units instead of nuclear weapons.

47. Thomas Donnelly, Margaret Roth and Caleb Baker, Operation Just Cause: The Storming of Panama, (New York: Lexington Books, 1991), foreword.

48. Joint Pub 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, (Washington, D.C.: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 23 March 1994), p. 97.

49. The myth that Clausewitz advocated total war has been thoroughly debunked by Peter Paret, Michael Howard, and many others. Clausewitz, of course, recognized that war would not tend to the absolute because of the political considerations. The phrases that have been quoted out of context include: "To introduce the principle of moderation into the theory of war itself would always lead to logical absurdity." p. 76 and "The thesis, then, must be repeated: war is an act of force, and there is no logical limit to the application of that force." p. 77. That Clausewitz did not believe traditional concepts of war would tend to the absolute is clear in this quote: "But

move from the abstract to the real world, and the whole thing looks quite different. In the abstract world, optimism was all-powerful and forced us to assume that both parties to the conflict not only sought perfection but attained it.” p. 78. *However*, Clausewitz then continues, and asks “Would this ever be the case in practice? Yes, it would if: (a) war were a wholly isolated act, occurring suddenly and not produced by previous events in the political world; (b) it consisted of a single decisive act or a set of simultaneous ones; (c) the decision achieved was complete and perfect in itself, uninfluenced by any previous estimate of the political situation it would bring about.” p. 78. *This* seems to speak for the maximum exercise of force during a *coup de main*; Clausewitz additionally states: “If war consisted of one decisive act, or of a set of simultaneous decisions, preparations would tend toward totality, for no omission could ever be rectified.” p. 79 and “But, of course, if all the means available were, or could be, simultaneously employed, all wars would automatically be confined to a single decisive act or a set of simultaneous ones...” p. 79. A BRILLIANT STILETTO *coup de main* is just such an operation, and the moderation of force in its execution can only detract from its chances of success. Edward Luttwak, in support of the maximum application of force during a *coup d’etat*, a similar operation, stated: “But the coup differs from most military operations in one crucial respect: while in war it is often advantageous to retain some forces as reserves to be used in later (and possibly more critical) phases of the conflict, in a coup the principle of total commitment applies. The active stage takes place in one short period of time and forces held back today will be useless tomorrow: all our forces must therefore be used in the one decisive engagement.” [Edward Luttwak, *Coup d’Etat: A Practical Handbook*, (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publishers, 1969), p. 149.] In the final analysis, Clausewitz guides us in determining the degree of force to be exercised with his maxim: “If the enemy is to be coerced you must put him in a situation that is even more unpleasant than the sacrifice you call on him to make.” p. 77. (All of the above quotes from Clausewitz taken from Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds., (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), with applicable page number following the quote.)

50. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds., (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 89.

51. Edward Luttwak, *Coup d’Etat: A Practical Handbook*, (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, 1969), pp. 24-45.

52. *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 32, and 45, respectively. Luttwak also states that there exist temporary factors that may enhance the possibility of success of a coup, including “...severe and prolonged economic crisis, with large-scale unemployment or runaway inflation...a long and unsuccessful war or a major defeat, military or diplomatic...[and] chronic instability under a multi-party system.” *ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

53. Joint Pub 1-02 defines direct action as “Short-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions by special operations forces to seize, destroy, capture, recover, or inflict damage on designated personnel or materiel. In the conduct of these operations, special

operations forces may employ raid, ambush, or direct assault tactics; emplace mines and other munitions; conduct standoff attacks by fire from air, ground, or maritime platforms; provide terminal guidance for precision-guided munitions; and conduct independent sabotage." Joint Pub 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, (Washington, D.C.: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 23 March 1994), p. 116.

54. Luttwak argues that the relevance of a force can be determined by its response time: "This suggests the principal criteria by which we separate out the forces relevant to the coup, whether military or not: *The forces relevant to a coup are those whose locations and/or equipment enables them to intervene in its locale (usually the capital city) within the 12-24 hour time-span which precedes the establishment of its control over the machinery of government.*" Edward Luttwak, Coup d'Etat: A Practical Handbook, (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publishers, 1969), p. 62. I have chosen a broader criterion, as it appears to some extent arbitrary to assume that "control over the machinery of government" can be established within 24 hours. The length of the operation depends on the nature of the target.

55. Rarely, if ever, will BRILLIANT STILETTO operations alone accomplish anything constructive or lasting. BRILLIANT STILETTO is a destructive tactic designed to preempt threats. Following a BRILLIANT STILETTO *coup de main* there exists, therefore, a vacuum of power in the targeted State. Although the strike may achieve complete success, its victory may be a pyrrhic achievement if the void is not filled with post-strike operations in the arenas of the diplomatic, economic, and informational fields of the instruments of power. These operations, following a BRILLIANT STILETTO strike, could be termed BRILLIANT TOPHAT, BRILLIANT COIN, and BRILLIANT MENTOR. Seen together, they would comprise an operation concerning the exercise of all the instruments of Grand Strategy, and could be termed BRILLIANT VISION. The focus of a BRILLIANT VISION operation is the accomplishment of a strategic end, unlike a preemptive strike which is concerned with a tactical victory.

56. Joint Pub 1-02 defines Foreign Internal Defense as "Participation by civilian and military agencies of a government in any of the action programs taken by another government to free and protect its society from subversion, lawlessness, and insurgency." Joint Pub 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, (Washington, D.C.: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 23 March 1994), p. 152.

57. The failure to neutralize potential threats to the success of the coup can be disastrous. On 3 October 1989, Major Moisés Giroldi attempted to oust Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega using the Panamanian Defense Force's (PDF) 4th Infantry Company and a riot police unit. Giroldi was successful in capturing General Noriega, however, he did not take into account the likelihood that units loyal to Noriega would attempt to rescue him. In his reluctance to kill Noriega, Giroldi hesitated. The coup was put down by the PDF's 7th Infantry Company, and Giroldi and his rebels were executed that day. Thomas Donnelly, Margaret Roth and Caleb Baker, Operation Just Cause: The Storming of Panama, (New York: Lexington Books, 1991), pp. 69, 72.

58. Luttwak divides a similar list into: "The Ceremonial Figures," "The "Inner Council" and the Controllers of the Means of Coercion," "The Other Ministers and Top Civil Servants," and "Personalities Outside Government." I have chosen to alter the descriptions of the individual categories to more accurately reflect the more military nature of a *coup de main* vice a *coup d'etat*, as well as to highlight the practical military utility in targeting such individuals. For Luttwak's list see Edward Luttwak, Coup d'Etat: A Practical Handbook, (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, 1969), pp. 115-116.

59. Luttwak identifies three types of structures: 1. "The seat of effective political power"; 2. "The main administrative buildings"; and 3. "Symbolic buildings." Luttwak's list is, however, much too rudimentary to guide effective targeting for a *coup de main*. His failure to include alternate command and control facilities in his category of the "seat of effective political power" is just one example of its inadequate depth and scope of target analysis. The list introduced in this monograph incorporates a deeper and broader scope to facilitate target identification. For Luttwak's list see *ibid.*, pp. 129-130.

60. This supervisory oversight can be easily achieved during pre-strike planning through the use of a master target database, similar to the National Strategic Target List (NSTL) that during the Cold War was maintained by the Joint Strategic Targeting and Planning System (JSTPS), which contained data on all the targets that might need to be attacked in a nuclear strike. Additionally, the rapid selection of critical targets could be enhanced by developing a preemptive strike target database, by State or actor, similar to the Target Data Inventory (TDI) prepared by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). The TDI at one time listed approximately 500,000 possible targets in the former USSR, and a database appropriate for supporting preemptive strikes conducted by conventional units could assist in the BRILLIANT STILETTO planning and targeting process. Desmond Ball outlines these tools for planning and targeting: "The JSTPS performs two primary functions: the first is to maintain the National Strategic Target List (NSTL), which contains data on all the targets that might need to be attacked in a nuclear strike; the second is to prepare the SIOP." and "The most comprehensive list of potential targets is the Target Data Inventory (TDI) prepared by the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), which is an outgrowth of the Air Force Bombing Encyclopedia prepared during World War II, and which is in turn kept current by the Target Intelligence Division of the Air Force Intelligence Service. The TDI currently lists approximately 500,000 possible targets in the USSR." Desmond Ball, "Targeting for Strategic Deterrence," Adelphi Papers, no. 185, (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1983), p. 9 and p. 26, respectively.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 357.

62. This observation leads to a theoretical underpinning for conventional preemptive strikes: either systems or forces are targeted for conventional preemption. Unlike nuclear targeting theory, conventional targeting of cities would be inefficient, and thus ineffective, for pursuing a countervailing target category. The destruction of a city, if accomplished, by conventional weaponry would probably not preempt an imminent threat, but trigger it. This is due to the greater time and resources required to destroy a city through conventional weaponry, hence greater inefficiency relative to a nuclear device, and the threat perception that conventional

weapons and tactics, unlike nuclear weapons, can be countered both offensively and defensively. The threat force or system that would have originally posed the perceived friendly need to preempt through a countervailing strategy of conventional attack against cities would be launched to halt the friendly force's attack meant to preempt it. Conventional preemption can only be attained through attacking a force or a system, or both. The issue of deterrence through a countervailing strategy pursued with conventional weaponry is also problematic, due to the inefficiency of even brilliant munitions compared to nuclear weapons and the threat's ability to counter their effects through offensive and defensive countermeasures. Deterrence through a counterforce or countersystem strategy pursued with brilliant munitions is, however, very plausible, especially when the targeted system is the threat leadership.

63. Desmond Ball points out that forces have characteristics that make them more difficult targets: "As compared to cities, military forces as targets are much more varied in character; they are generally smaller and are frequently hardened or mobile; and they are often subject to rapid short-term increases." Desmond Ball, "Targeting for Strategic Deterrence," Adelphi Papers, no. 185, (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1983), p. 1.

64. The statement of vulnerability to strikes is based on the same principle as their increased susceptibility to failure from other causes: "As systems grow in size and in the number of diverse functions they serve, and are built to function in ever more hostile environments, increasing their ties to other systems, they experience more and more incomprehensible or unexpected interactions. They become more vulnerable to unavoidable system accidents." Charles Perrow, Normal Accidents: Living with High-Risk Technologies, (New York: Basic Books, 1984), p. 72.

65. The term "branches" is used here in the strictly doctrinal definition of the US Army Field Manual Operations: "branch - a contingency plan (an option built into the basic plan) for changing the disposition, orientation, or direction of movement of the force." US Army Field Manual FM 100-5, Operations, (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 14 June 1993), p. G-1.

66. For a graphic portrayal of warning time available and its relation to decision points see Appendix D: On Time, Risk, Certainty, and Payoff.

67. That intelligence analysts are less often to blame than politicians for surprise, and why this is so, Richard Betts argues: "The principal cause of surprise is not the failure of intelligence but the unwillingness of political leaders to believe intelligence or to react to it with sufficient dispatch." *and* "Politician's reluctance to authorize military response to early warning is rarely due to stupidity or negligence. Rather, it is due to concern, sometimes justifiable, that military reaction may worsen the crisis and decrease the chances of avoiding war." Richard K. Betts, Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning, (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1982), p. 4.

68. Clausewitz himself, of course, acknowledges the primacy of politics over military considerations: "...war is only a branch of political activity; that it is in no sense autonomous." and "If war is part of policy, policy will determine its character." Carl von Clausewitz, "On

War." Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds., (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 605 and p. 606, respectively.

69. Bidwell, R.G.S., "The Five Fallacies: Some Thoughts on British Military Thinking," (London: *Journal of the Royal United Service Institute* 112, February 1967), p 54.

70. See endnote 19.

71. Edward Luttwak makes the point that the initial success enjoyed by any innovation, either in equipment or employment, is inevitably subject to the active development of countermeasures by other States: "Slightly less obvious is the relationship (inevitably paradoxical) between the very success of new devices and the likelihood of their eventual failure: any sensible enemy will focus his most urgent efforts on countermeasures meant to neutralize whatever opposing device seems most dangerous at the time." Luttwak, Edward N. Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 27-28.



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